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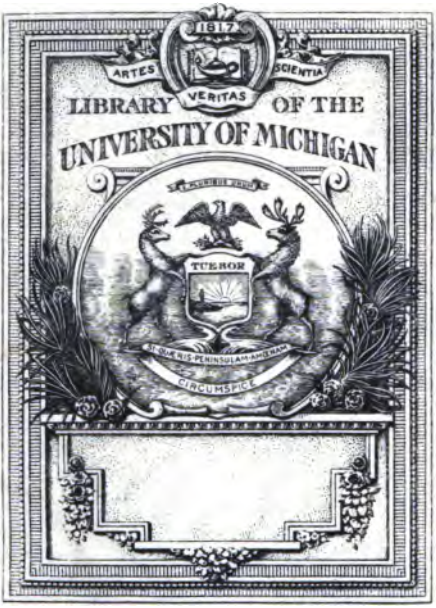


Gift of
Rowland C. Stebbins

Dorat, Claude Joseph

# CHEVALIER

DE

# VERSENAI,

## A Novel,

IN TWO VOLUMES,

TRANSLATED

FROM THE FRENCH OF MAD. COTTIN,

Author of "Elizabeth, or, The Exiles of Siberia;" &c. &c.

VOL. I.

London:

PRINTED FOR J. F. HUGHES, 15, PATERNOSTER-ROW,

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Caroline C. Stebbins
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# ADVERTISEMENT.

I HAVE not had it in my power to have the following series of letters printed as soon as I wished; in consequence of which delay, some spurious editions have appeared, filled with contradictions, transpositions, and other intolerable faults. This which I now present to the public, is at least carefully revised. It will be found that there are but few of the letters in which I have not made some alterations. The thou and thy of Madame de Senanges and the Chevalier seemed to displease, and I have suppressed them.

As to the character of my heroine, I have thought it my duty to preserve it as I had originally conceived it. The criticisms it has given rise to, prove in a singular manner to what a degree our morals are depraved. It has been exclaimed against as an improbability, that a woman, in spite of her passion, should respect her duties, be faithful to her ties, and rise superior to her weaknesses; and I have been reproached as romantic to an excess, because I have undertaken to draw a virtuous character. After all, perhaps it might be possible to exculpate Madame de Senanges, and not render her entirely responsible for her virtue. This woman so extraordinary, may have been governed by circumstances. She is carried off, and placed in a convent, perhaps at the very moment she was, by yielding, about to recover the good-will of my readers.

It is strange that a resistance of six

months cannot be supposed, without scandalizing the one half of Paris. I ask pardon for having dared to do so, and for having taken the liberty of producing so bad an example.

A beautiful woman, well known by a series of adventures, and who cannot be reproached with the cruelty of letting her lovers languish, exclaimed, after having read these letters—"*What a ridiculous prude is that Madame de Senanges! she is my aversion!*"

This picture of manners has pleased me much more than an eulogium on my work, and perhaps it is one.

I do not pretend to justify the style of character I have given to Madame d'Ercy; but did I chuse to name my models, it would be found far from exaggerated. Besides, the critics can no longer hurt me. I have found them so unjust, so rudely severe, and so insolently base, that the tranquillity of con-

tempt will for ever preserve me from the irritations of self-love, and from the weakness of condescending to answer them.

The discourse which precedes this work was only a rapid sketch, made without entering much into the depth of the subject. In this edition I have entitled it merely a preface; and as I have had time to reduce it in length, it will perhaps answer the purpose better.

# PREFACE.

It would be an undertaking, perhaps not unworthy a man of taste, to cast a retrospective view over the variations which have taken place in the genius of our romances, and to mark, in following that interesting chain, the shades of national character, the alterations it has undergone, the respective influence of manners upon writings, and of writings upon manners; the progress, the revolutions, and the decay of gallantry amongst us.

After those almost fabulous ages of heroism and chivalry, during which love was rather a religious extacy than a profane delirium, rather a superstition than a sentiment, came forth those voluminous archives, depicting characters void of probability; where the heroine exacted trials of skill from all those who presented themselves before her; whilst the hero, more simple still than valorous, thought himself called upon to conquer whole provinces, before he could attain to the honor of kissing the hand of his mistress.

In descending towards those times, when the two sexes had more familiar intercourse, respected each other less, and gave way to the dictates of love, yet still, under the veil of decency, that last vestige of the ancient worship, romance acquired life, interest, and consistence with truth. Intrigues less complicated left the reader time to breathe;

weakness struggling against seduction called forth applause; the difficulties attendant on resistance excited pity; the delirium of the senses the forerunner of defeat was mourned; and sympathy enjoyed the sweet and healing tears of penitence.

At length arrived that æra of laxity of manners, and perversion of principles, in which men, elegantly vicious, deceived and were deceived; attacked women only to obtain, if they could, the right of despising them, and become, by that very means, more contemptible than their victims. It was then that recourse was had to the pompous indelicacies of Hamilton; and still more to the ingenious code of that charming philosopher to whom we are indebted for the *Sopha*, the *Wanderings of the Heart*, and *Tanzai*; of that just appreciator of the age; of that profound painter of frivolity, who seems to have

peeped into every boudoir, and there surprised the voluptuous languishments of the prude, the vague sighs of the coquette, and the intoxication of all those females who have at least as much promptitude of sensations as refinement of sentiment.

This examination of the different epochas might become curious, and develope in part the history, still so imperfect, of the human heart; but this plan would lead me too far at present, and might almost furnish materials for a separate work. I shall therefore content myself with some reflections scattered without method upon the nature of the composition which I have here attempted.

We have a great number of romances, satirical, trifling, gallant, and licentious; but very few in which manners are painted, or passions brought into action; where man may behold himself such as he really is! Humbled by the almost

total want of those well-drawn and interesting pictures, we have had recourse to our neighbours, rather from a sort of fashion however, than from any real attraction. It is certain they rise much superior to us in strength of colouring; there is in the character of the English, I know not how to express it, a kind of energetic sap, which communicates itself to their writings. When liberty guides the pencil, the figures are unconstrained and at full length; and some men capable of every thing in a republican government, would elsewhere be but ciphers.

The productions of a citizen of London sometimes savor of that effort of labour, which is incompatible with the graces; but the *convulsion* past, the effect is displayed and remains. Our works are, for the most part, a sort of miniatures, where the smaller strokes predominate. What can be expected from these

puerile refinements? They extinguish imagination, and congeal the feelings. To draw from nature any of her secrets, we should seek her in the calm of meditation; encourage in ourselves those solitary contemplations that enthusiasm of benevolence, and that soft melancholy which stamp with a character of grandeur all the ideas which emanate from them. This is what distinguishes the English writers. They dive into the depths of the soul; we perpetually sport on its surface: they display the passion by the action; we express it in terms poorly inadequate: they execute from countenances distinct and varied; we sketch after masks which all resemble each other.

They have been frequently accused of dwelling too much on minute details; but in these very details consists one of the secrets of genius. The British observer neglects nothing when man is the

object of his study; he knows that physical appearances throw light upon the moral system. An Englishman, by looking at me, will be able to form a judgment of me: some Frenchmen, after a long acquaintance, will not know me. The one has a glance penetrating and decisive; that of the other is vague and indeterminate.

It is the allowing the heart, the understanding, and the senses, to rest on different objects which gives birth to those imputed *inutilities*, which abound in the romances of our neighbours; they make use of them to produce great effects, and to deepen by degrees the shades of impression: in ours the painter almost always obtrudes himself into the fore-ground, and would himself at once personate all his different characters. It is no longer an action which passes, it is an apish exhibition which shocks and makes me sad. By attempting to polish

each part, the whole becomes a mere skeleton. We resemble those ingenious artificers who know how to direct the electric spark: the English are the skillful miners, who concealed in the bowels of the earth, there exercise their subterranean art, and meet the astonished eye only at the moment of explosion.

What renders us peculiarly ridiculous is, the rage for appearing what we are not. Those islanders, of whom we are the declared competitors, are born thinkers; we endeavour to become so, and even when we do succeed, the effort is apparent.* We may compare ourselves to those upstarts in society, whose assumed dignity sits so awkwardly

* There are many exceptions in our favor; but they destroy not my position, which I submit with due deference to more enlightened understandings. In France some individuals give the example; in England it is the nation who think.

upon them, that their origin is easily guessed at.

In the parallel, of which I have here given a rough sketch, may be found, I am persuaded, the cause of that superiority which the English romances have over ours. Besides, writings of this nature are brought into disrepute amongst us, from the multitude of immoral productions which have made their appearance. These are in general the fruits of intemperate imaginations, and of a corruption which has overflowed its boundaries, and spreads far and wide. Romance, such as it ought to be, is one of the most excellent productions of the human genius, because one of the most useful: it bears the palm even from history; an assertion which it will not be difficult to prove.

History is most frequently nothing more than a uniform picture of vices without elevation, and weaknesses with-

out interest; merely a collection of facts which may rouse curiosity, but is totally subversive of morality. Romance, when well executed, is founded on the actual system of the society in which we live; it is, I am not afraid to call it so, the *existing*, the useful history, that of the moment.

The moral end of that which I here present to my readers, is to prove, that on one side, a woman the most tenderly attached may fulfil all the duties which oppose themselves to her passion, and become still the more interesting from these struggles with herself: on the other, that there is no sacrifice which such a woman may not obtain from the most empassioned lover if he is worthy of her affection.

I have endeavoured to mark as distinctly as I could, the language of my different characters. When a woman expresses herself in the same style as

her lover, they both cease to please us. Men write with more vivacity, more rapture perhaps; women with more sensibility, tenderness, and softness; with them all comes from the heart.

I have not overcharged these letters with romantic incidents; I have brought forward characters and passions. The representation of manners suffices for the understanding, and all is event for the heart. What shades! what revolutions! what instability even in the same sentiment! Woe to the writer who to describe these has recourse to the imagination rather than the heart! he often speaks in an unknown tongue, and we become weary of listening to him.

I have not restricted myself to a regular order in placing the letters. The tedious formality of having the answer follow each letter, would, in my opinion, be disgusting. I am no more fond of books too methodical than of gardens

where there are too many straight lines. Sometimes my heroine replies to a letter which has not appeared, and leaves unanswered one which has just been read. There is a pleasure in filling up the intermediate spaces; particularly where the subject is such that the imagination can easily supply the materials.

Neither have I broken in upon the interest of the principle action (in whatever degree it may exist) by episodes, or those pompous reasonings, which force the reader to discussion, when he wishes only to listen to sentiment.

Upon the whole I dare flatter myself, that however little favor I may find in the sight of some severe critics, I shall be consoled by the suffrages of those more lenient judges who consider in a work less the graces of execution than the general tenor, and the spirit by which it has been dictated.

# VERSENAI.

## LETTER I.

FROM THE CHEVALIER DE VERSENAI, TO THE BARON DE***.

How much do I envy you, my dear Baron! Though at that age when we so seldom voluntarily renounce any enjoyment, you have quitted Paris to reside on your paternal estate: you prefer the sweets of a philosophic and tranquil retirement to the noise and tumult of the world. It is there that your soul rises superior, that it acquires strength to fortify it against those factitious wants which are the bane of society;

for all concurs to convince me that social man is punished by those very sensations from which he had hoped to derive his most exquisite pleasures.— You are escaped from the tempest of the passions. You have no tie (I except those of friendship) which places your repose at the mercy of others. A noble fortune renders you independent of men, unless in affording you opportunities for that good which you delight to do them. Your vassals are happy.— You animate labor, and industry is fostered by the encouragement you give it. The fertility of your fields forms the charms of your demesne; and your happiness (if I may so express myself) is reflected by every being that surrounds you. What a smiling perspective! but the more I contemplate such scenes, the more forcibly do I feel those untoward circumstances which debar me from participating in them. Peace

was never so much a stranger to my soul.

What will you think of me on perusing this letter? Is this the tone of my age? What shall I say? My style borrows its tint from my soul: that soul so ardent is at this moment melancholy and depressed, and yet not the less agitated.

It is now six years since I first made my entrance into active life. The eager pursuit of rising in my profession, a lively taste for pleasure, the effervescence of youth, and a warm imagination, have hitherto precluded reflection, and borne me impetuous on. At my age all is pleasure, all intoxication; the remembrance of the past is sweet, the present transports, and hope spreads her gay tints over the future; the head reels; the heart is on fire; we live in a world of enchantment. Happy age! where one enjoyment but leads to another;

where the momentary flashes of reason shew us the charms of life, without exposing its rocks! My friend, I have escaped from the garden of Armida, and find myself in a desert.

Believe not, I again repeat it, that this state is a state of languor: it is, on the contrary, the vague inquietude of a soul panting for an unknown pleasure.

I have no complaints to make of fortune. I have a regiment; I am high in favor with one of the women of the court, who in wit and beauty form its highest boast: her credit there augments every day; my situation excites envy, yet fails to render me happy. Shall I confess to you? it is this very woman whose zeal has been so useful to me, and who besides possesses every charm, every attraction—it is she in part who is the cause of my chagrin. You have met her sometimes: it is impossible to possess united more exterior advantages,

more seducing loveliness. She has to please, secrets which belong only to herself. She is beautiful, yet one would be tempted to dispense with that gift, for she has so much grace, that we forget her beauty. But, alas! all this is but the magic of the moment; whilst character is that of all seasons: her's is volatile, superficial, haughty. Her head deceives her as to the emotions of her heart; what can result from this false calculation? She is jealous with hauteur, exacting without tenderness, and capricious to an excess beyond my powers of painting; and caprice in women is ever in proportion to their coldness. It is in them, as I imagine, a sort of revolt against nature; they would avenge themselves for not having been formed susceptible; and would punish us for not having succeeded in creating a heart where it did not exist.

The Marchioness d'Ercy joins to all these faults an immeasurable ambition, which renders her in a degree dependant on all the variations of court favor. Her soul, I may venture to pronounce it, is depraved by intrigue, and by that wish to dazzle which is the bane of all the gentle virtues, of true pleasures, and of all earthly felicity.

You will perceive that I no longer love her, since I can thus sit in judgment on her: from hence those gloomy ideas which overwhelm me. I am under the most weighty obligations to her, and with those of her age, you know we can only acquit ourselves by love. From day to day mine for her diminishes; but my gratitude seems to acquire new strength in proportion as my passion declines. After this explanation you will believe I am too much a man of honor not to be truly miserable. I have never

for a single instant taken into my account that if I wound her self-love I expose myself to her vengeance. I remember only her past bounties; they have left in my soul the most profound impression. I mourn the loss of an illusion which veiled from me all that could detach me from her. I wished to have cherished it till my latest breath, and to have been able to dress in the garb of virtues all the faults of my benefactress.

Pity me, Baron, I deserve your pity, the evil is without remedy, and I myself urge on the fatality which makes me thus ungrateful; this awakens self-reproach. I love another object. I feel the double torment of an extinguished love and a new-born passion; the embarrassment of quitting one woman, with the fear that I shall not succeed in pleasing another; the want of interest is every thing which is not that other; the war of principles against sentiments,

such are my present feelings which distract my soul, and plunge me in despair; and this situation is perhaps the most important period of my life from the degree of interest inseparably entwined with this new attachment which I feel, must ever form the dearest part of my existence. You know the divine woman who is the object of it. Know her do I say! You have always felt that esteem for her which her character exacts. I recal with delight those encomiums which you have formerly bestowed on her. I then thought them exaggerations; at present how faint do the colorings appear! how infinitely short of reality! After all I have said, need I name to you the Vicomtesse de Senanges? it is she, yes, it she who has for ever fixed this devoted heart.

It is abot two months since I one evening went to pay my devoirs to the Princess de ***. The assembly

at her house was numerous; the female part of it particularly. Many of them were pretty, all thought themselves so, not one appeared to me interesting. Madame de Senanges was announced. As I had heard her much spoken of, but had never before met her, I secretly felicitated myself on this opportunity of judging for myself.—Scarce was she entered the room when all eyes were fixed on her; those of the men to admire, the women's with far different sensations. After an examination the most scrutinizing, the most studiously prolonged, being but too fully convinced of those charms which attracted all eyes, they could no longer conceal their chagrin which became visible in their whisperings, their gestures, their questions, their replies, or in an affected silence. The Princess herself, who is rather past the age even of pretension, found that Madame de

Senanges was on this evening much too beautiful to burst thus upon a circle of females to eclipse them all when they least expected it. I perceived the conspiracy which was forming against her, and took care not to become an accomplice in it. The conversation languished: it was revived at intervals only by some dull monosyllables which announced the last degree of weariness. Madame de Senanges became disconcerted. Her fine eyes wandered on all sides with an embarrassment which she took no pains to conceal; she seemed to implore an indulgence of which she stood in so little need. I came to her assistance; I turned the conversation on the topics of the day, and the events which at that time interested society.—I shall never forget the look which she gave me, as if to thank me for this relief. Her whole soul seemed to speak in it, and the modesty which accom-

panied it took nothing from its expression. That look sealed my doom. Madame de Senanges was charming during all the remainder of the visit.—She spoke with that unaffected ease which you have so often praised, and the sound of her voice penetrated to my soul. A thousand brilliant sallies escaped her, which I took care to display to others, and which I treasured for myself. She avenged herself on the ladies present, by making them be forgotten, and by her sweet vivacity conciliated some among them whom she had irritated by the eclat of her beauty.

After this triumph, to which I was enchanted to have contributed, she took her leave, and I followed her by one of those involuntary impulses for which we know so little how to account, and which I have since regarded as the indiscretion of a heart no longer under my own control.

From that moment the image of Madame de Senanges has ever been present with me. To seek for her at balls, at the theatres, when there to behold only her; to attend her as her shadow, these are my sole pleasures. No more excursions with my gay companions, no more festive suppers, no more of those insipid formalities called visits, but which I am at present tempted to name the intercourse of frozen souls and vacant hearts.

How does all change to the eyes of lovers! Love creates a universe for souls of sensibility. It is that universe which I now inhabit. In the midst of a crowd I am alone.

Six weeks had elapsed from the time of our first interview, I became wild with impatience at thus being able to see her only where all the world were witnesses. I detested that public homage which seemed to me to profane

the idol of my love. At length I learned that my relation, the old Duc de **, often visited her, and had long been ranked in the number of her most intimate friends. I entreated him to introduce me at her house. He promised to ask her permission, kept his word, obtained what I so ardently desired, and led me thither a few days after.

This is my present position, my dear Baron; I see her two or three times a week. How tedious, how melancholy seem the other days! I enjoy her conversation, I quaff large draughts of love, but I have not yet dared to discover my sentiments. My words have conveyed nothing of them; she does not seem to understand the language of my eyes; but I see her, and I am happy.

I have now opened my whole heart to you; I have laid before you its

situation, thus perplexed on one side, painful on the other. I throw myself into the arms of friendship: you know its sacred influence, my friend, and I have never concealed from you any of the secrets of my soul. In return for my confidence, speak to me of Madame de Senanges, but above all, never urge me to renounce my love. One other favor I would beg of you, it is to write to her, and to——I know not what I would say; but you are indulgent, are you not? Besides, are not lovers privileged beings, in whom all is pardoned? You have been and are still connected, by habits of intimacy, with Madame de Senanges; you must have a thousand particulars to tell me of her; all are now interesting to me.

Can you conceive the reports which are propogated of this charming woman? Is it true that she is a coquette? Is it true? No, no, I will credit nothing of

all they accuse her of. Superior women are always envied and calumniated: seek not to undeceive me in this point. I will believe in nothing, Baron, but my friendship for you, and my love for her.

## BILLET.

FROM THE CHEVALIER DE VERSENAI, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

I SEND you, Madame, the anecdotes of the court of ****. This book merits your attention. The heroes of a gallant and polished court will doubtless be to your taste. You will find in this work faithful lovers, and women of sensibility. You believe not in the one, you fear to resemble the others.—Heaven grant you may not always think thus!

## LETTER II.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

Ah! say what you will: do what you can to condemn those men who have the happiness of knowing you, to the cold limits of friendship, all cannot obey you. When we behold all the charms which intoxicate the senses, united to all the qualities which attach the soul, you must expect a sentiment more animated, but we must *guard* against it: this is your favourite term, and you utter not an expression which my heart does not retain. How cruel, how ill-founded, are your prejudices! Learn to judge yourself better, and they will quickly vanish.

How, Madame, when you meet with a man who loves you as you merit to be

loved, will neither the strength nor the sincerity of his passion ever succeed in inspiring you with confidence? Can you do the most tender of lovers the injury to believe that artifice has any share in his conduct towards you? and must he, before he can touch your heart, dissipate all those doubts which your imagination has formed? Be it so—I expose myself to all, even to your anger; it is upon me that your suspicions ought to fall. Yes, my fate is now in your hands; and however dreadful it may be, I am but too happy that it depends solely upon you. If this confession displeases you, punish me for it. Speak to me with that ingenuous frankness which characterizes you; plunge me in despair without remorse or pity. I shall still have one consolation remaining, that of adoring the most charming of women, of cherishing in silence a sentiment which

nothing can change, and of having sacrificed to you all the happiness of my life.

From the moment I first beheld you, Madame, I panted with the desire of knowing you further; no sooner did I know you than all other women became annihilated in my eyes. If you condemn my love, you cannot at least attack the motives which gave it birth. I speak not of your personal charms.—Ah! who ever united more than you? It was your mind that fixed me yours; and I should have esteemed myself very little indeed, had I known how to resist so powerful an attraction.

Another, Madame, would implore your pardon for such an avowal; I shall offer my excuse only for having so long deferred it. Every true attachment has its claims, if not for a return, at least for indulgence from the beloved object; and it is only little minds that

blush to own what they must glory in feeling. Again I repeat it, hesitate not to wound me, if I am doomed to endure your rigor; I am ready to suffer all—But, in mercy, torture me as little as possible. I need no signature, I think, to be known.

## LETTER III.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

You ask of me, Monsieur, to torture you as little as possible, and you wound me to the soul! When I believed you to be my friend, when that idea formed my happiness, it is—It matters not however: I will do you justice; you are a man of honor doubtless, superior I will believe to the generality of your sex: but the name of love does not the less affright me. Ah! why not

prefer friendship? Its charms are pure, they owe nothing to illusion, depend not on caprice; esteem forms its basis, time strengthens its ties; no remorse disturbs its peaceful pleasures. But love!—It is not permitted for women to taste of love. Custom has not destroyed this prejudice: in spite of example it still subsists in our hearts.—Certain of being despised when we yield to our inclinations; yet how much to be pitied when obliged to sacrifice them: we are condemned to be either culpable or unfortunate.—Such is the fate of women. Yet they are believed happy! they whom you attack so often from vanity, subdue without gratitude, and calumniate without reflection! They, who have to dread, in loving, not only the inconstancy and indiscretion of one single object, but the censure of all! Be persuaded, however, that I can make distinctions,

and that I know how to appreciate your worth. My distrust is not unflattering to you; it turns but upon one single point: I should be sorry to forego it: even though unjust, it is unnecessary. Reflect maturely; your age, your connections, the circumstances which attend my situation, all ought to forbid a passion for me; all ought at least to interdict the avowal of it.

## LETTER IV.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SÉNANGES.

Very well, Madame, I shall make it my study to dissipate your alarms: and when your distrust shall have disappeared, you will allow that it was not the most cruel enemy I had to combat.

However that may be, I cannot re-

pent. The avowal I have made is a balm to my heart; it gives me at least a right to your friendship, and no sentiment which comes from your heart can be indifferent to mine. I have studied the female character, and have found it almost exclusively the case, that they prefer the voluptuous indulgence of the senses to the refined intercourse of the heart. You alone have realized the idea I had formed to myself of the being with whom I should wish to pass my life. You alone are all-perfect; and it appears in you that the graces take a pleasure in adorning virtue. To what an excess could I love you! How much, alas! would I do to please you! I should wish you at least one day to say, "Why could I not return his tenderness? Perhaps he would have formed my happiness—I was sure of constituting all his."

## LETTER V.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

If your beauteous eyes have been too early unclosed, you may shut them again. The rehearsal of the new comic opera has not taken place. The actors are sick—the parts have not been conned—the author complains—I am in despair—and you, Madame, you compose yourself again to sleep! Is it still determined that your journey is to take place to-morrow? You are to be absent eight days! what ages! Your society has for me a charm inexpressible, and I look forward with the most sensible regret to the length of your absence. Could you look into the inmost recesses of my heart, and know how entirely it is devoted to you, would

you not pardon sentiments as pure as the celestial soul to which it pays homage? Those sentiments, it is true, may render me miserable, but it is impossible you can impute them to me as crimes. I meant merely to inform you of the disappointment as to the comic opera, and behold how I have wandered!—I no longer know what I say; too well do I know what is to be my hapless fate: but that which above all I know, is that I can never cease to adore you.

## LETTER VI.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

*From the Chateau de ***.*

THE life I lead here is extremely rational. I go to bed early; play but little; and often shut myself up to read. We have a great deal of company; and

we have amongst them, alas! a certain gentleman of whom I have sometimes spoken to you. He is more metaphysical than ever; and deals out his dissertations without mercy, seasonably, or unseasonably, during the whole course of the day. I listen to him sometimes, but I rarely comprehend him: I do not enter the lists with him however, his lungs are much stronger than mine; he takes my silence for docility, and seems highly pleased with me. The situation of this place is very charming, particularly that of a delicious pavillion on the banks of the river, where we sometimes go to sit, in spite of the cold. Notwithstanding all this, I shall return to Paris with pleasure. Our springs are only winters prolonged. A thousand thanks for your three letters which I have received.

Now I think of mentioning it—the Duchess de ***, whose chateau is in

this neighbourhood, came yesterday to see us. She was attended by many persons, who are at present staying with her. The Marchioness d'Ercy, with whom it is said you are upon the best terms, was one of the party. The conversation turned upon your subject: you have reason to be satisfied, Monsieur, perfectly satisfied with the interest she seems to take in your affairs. I thought I should do you a pleasure in not allowing you to remain ignorant of this. There is every appearance that you will soon obtain the appointment which she solicits for you at court. I congratulate you on it, as well as on the constancy of your attachment: it augments the good opinion I had of the lady, and the esteem I feel for you.

## LETTER VII.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

WERE I *upon the best terms* with the Marchioness d'Ercy, as you, Madame, seem to believe, I should not have ventured to make a declaration to you which could only have been dictated by the tenderest love, and the most firm determination to sacrifice all to that love. I will not dissemble with you the very lively preference I did feel for her: nor are you ignorant of those services she has rendered me. The preference is past, there remains only my gratitude; and your soul is not formed to disapprove of what does honor to mine. Believe me, Madame, this heart was free when I presumed to offer it to your acceptance. It is now that is become

a captive, and glories in its chains! those chains which never can be loosed! How feeble were those bonds which have hitherto held me! with what joy have I torn them asunder! and how much for the future shall I hate every thing which is not you! Why am I not so happy as that you should think me worthy to impose laws upon me? with what promptitude, what transport should you be obeyed! But, alas! you command me nothing; and it is with the frozen tone of indifference that you express suspicions of a heart in which you have lighted a passion, whose very torments are dear to me. That heart is pure, since it pertains to you; it is worthy to receive your image, your adored image, which eclipses all others, with which nothing else can intermingle, and which would be profaned by any comparison. I love you to idolatry. Never did sympathy more sweetly

forcible impel one being towards another. In the lowest abyss of misery you will see me cherish those bonds which have destroyed my peace, feast on my tears, and offer you that sad homage, the sole one, perhaps, which you will deign to accept.—For mercy's sake shut your ears to the reports and conjectures of the public; they will ever wrong me, believe me, when they attack my honor. Join with me in detesting the morals of a cruel and persecuting world, where virtue is always judged unfavourably, because it is always corruption that judges her.—You are my soul, my life, my universe. I might be much more worthy of being beloved; but it is impossible I could love to more excess. Yet again I implore you, dispose of me, exert your empire; form wishes, display even caprices; I shall place my happiness in flying to satisfy them. A billet of two

lines, a look, a word from you will raise me to the height of felicity: but should you deprive me of all, even to the hope of softening your obduracy, you cannot take from me that sweet and tender melancholy that owes its birth to an evil of which the cause will be ever most adored.

## LETTER VIII.

FROM THE BARON, TO THE CHEVALIER.

When your soul suffers, my dear Chevalier, you do well to pour its sorrows into mine. Though experience has fortified me against certain weaknesses, I know the tears that they cost, and pity the sufferings that result from them. I hate those morose philosophers, who imagine they approach nearer to perfection in proportion as they become hardened to the feelings of humanity;

in my opinion they stray widely from it by that cruel apathy, that repelling selfishness, which breaks the bands of society, and destroys all its sweetest attractions.

I too have known all the violence of that whirlwind with which you now struggle: I have felt the torment of being entangled in a double intrigue; of now obeying the dictates of the heart, and now being obliged to act in direct opposition to them; of contriving to avoid a breach on one hand, and arranging a new amour on the other; and of managing the self-love of two females, so as not to wound either. It was from having proved the misery which arises from conflicts of this nature, the satiety which attends enjoyments, the wearisomeness of infidelities, that I determined to call reason to my aid. I was tired of being a slave, and wished to be a man; I am so, but

I can arrogate this title to myself only from the moment that I resumed the privileges of one.

I now compare myself to a traveller, who, after having long wandered in the depth of an arid and burning valley, breathes at length the unconfined and refreshing air of a mountain.

My poor Chevalier! you are still at the bottom of the valley; I soar above you, but it is only with the wish of being useful to you. The eye of friendship shall follow you through that labyrinth where the clew each moment escapes from the hands. If it cannot always guide you, it will at least console you. My eyes are open—I have torn off the bandage which covered them; but I would replace it there, should it be necessary to dry the tears of my friend.

Recollect the conversation I had with you when I saw the commencement of

your connection with the Marchioness d'Ercy: I foretold all that has befallen you. She has a rank at court, a brilliant establishment, beauty which has rendered her celebrated, and a credit which she has had opportunities of proving; in a word, she is, as you men of the world would call it, an actor in the grand theatre of life. All this was calculated expressly to derange a young head. At your age we are more vain than susceptible. We give ourselves up to whatever flatters us most; we are amused for the first month, languid the second, wearied the third; and conclude by pulling down with opprobrium the idol which we had set up from vanity.

How was it possible for any length of time to love a woman absorbed in the calculations of intrigue, the incertitude of projects, and who filled up the voids of ambition with the levities of coquet-

ry! The Marchioness d'Ercy is what may be called, une femme d'affairs*. In this age beyond all former ones has this class of female politicians multiplied, who have their closets for dispatches as well as their boudoirs, who reason, decide, plunge headlong into politics, and affect them *essentially*, from the nature of their connections; to the great detriment and abuse of administration.

How have you entangled yourself, my dear Chevalier! what a mistress have you chosen! I blame you for having taken, not for quitting her. You exaggerate your ingratitude. Heaven forbid that I should urge you to a conduct even equivocal; but believe me, gratitude does not condemn us to the painful necessity of an eternal fidelity. Love, free as air, has far other methods of acquitting itself: the independence of its

* This cannot be so well expressed in English.

sentiments renders it incompatible with the heavy yoke of obligations. The Marchioness d'Ercy has procured you a regiment, a favorable reception at court; she has praised, patronized, introduced you every where, and you owe her some returns; very well so far: but she has engrossed you absolutely; carried you in public triumph at her chariot wheels, and tormented you with her caprices; you have contributed on your side in this connection, a fine figure, wit, talents, family importance, and youth: are you not then at least on equal terms with her? In short, however I may admire your scruples, which can only proceed from real delicacy of principle; I would not have you become the victim of an excess of heroism. Your soul is noble, ingenuous, and susceptible; but it is inexperienced, ardent, and, pardon me if I add, weak through extreme tenderness: it is possible such a soul might

be corrupted, and the Marchioness d'Ercy is capable of making the experiment. I dread the influence of her character over yours; I fear lest her fascinating depravity should overcome your rectitude; and were she even to become prime minister, and chuse you as her coadjutor, I should use my best endeavours to rescue you from her dangerous artifices. There are no principles powerful enough to restrain an artful woman in the pursuit of her purposes, either of pleasure or ambition.

How much are those false enchantresses to be dreaded who abuse those moments sacred to joy and happiness, by the allurements of vice which their false colors render but too amiable, whilst they lull virtue to sleep by the very accents of voluptuousness itself!

But now for Madame de Senanges. Yes, doubtless I know her, and as you say, esteem her highly. Her friend-

ship for me is one of those sweet and pure pleasures, the remembrance of which follows me into my solitude. You ask me for some details concerning her, which I consent to give you, and shall afterwards proceed to those counsels which I deem it necessary to offer you for her sake, as well as for your own, for you interest me equally. Be patient—read my letter with attention—and above all, resolve to profit by it.

Madame de Senanges is daughter to the Marquis de ***, an officer of distinguished merit, who, becoming a widower at a very early age, applied himself entirely to the care of her education. He loved her with the utmost tenderness, but did not enough consult the sentiments of her heart in the establishment he formed for her. Seduced by the rank of the Vicomte de Senanges, he forcibly combated the repugnance of his daughter, testified his wish to over-

comé it, and unfortunately succeeded in doing so. He foresaw not the fatal consequences of such a marriage, the tears that it would cost her, nor the too certain evils which must result from an union so ill assorted. He became the first victim to his misplaced ambition. He soon discovered the misery of his daughter, and reproached himself as the author of it; he wept his abuse of paternal authority, and died of remorse and vexation two years after the celebration of those nuptials which he had so ardently desired. May he serve as an example to those cruel or inconsiderate parents who, armed with their rights, force the inclinations of their daughters, and justify before-hand all the imprudences into which they precipitate themselves! They are the first artificers of the ruin that ensues!

The daughter of the Marquis was but fourteen years old when she es-

poused M. de Senanges, who was then in his fifty-fifth year. As he has past the greatest part of his life in his government, you have not perhaps had an opportunity of seeing or knowing him.

This man is of a stature uncommonly tall: his countenance is forbidding and severe, his manners imperious and rude; when he sues, and it is but rarely that he does so, you would suppose he commended. The small degree of delicacy he has ever had in the choice of his mistresses has rooted in him that natural irrational contempt for women, which is ever the attendant of little minds: he believes that virtue is unknown to the sex, and that with them man must either be a dupe or a tyrant. This atrocious system, joined to his natural temper, has given birth to a jealousy the most unjust in its principle, the most dreadful in its effects. I shall

not attempt to paint to you the many horrid scenes it has occasioned, and of which Madame de Senanges has sometimes made me the recital. Figure to yourself a young woman, virtuous and timid, in the power of an old despot who despised her, and who never turned an eye on her but such as are used to penetrate and intimidate guilt. There never escaped her a word that was not misinterpreted, a look that was not suspected. Her silence was the broodings of a soul which sought to deceive. Did she speak? it was the artifice of seduction with which she armed herself against him. The barbarian! even in her sleep, he tyrannized over her; he watched beside her with the pale agitation of suspicion, that he might from her dreams hear the expression of some hidden sentiment, which might serve either as pretext or aliment for his rage.

Such was the life she led for seven

years; during which period she never ceased to be a model of gentleness, of propriety, and moderation. She was deprived even of the solace and relief of tears; all centered in, and preyed upon her heart. Still she was patient. She interdicted herself even a murmur; and hoped, by a steady perseverance in the most blameless conduct, she should in time soften the tyger to whom she had the misfortune to be united. Vain hope! he acquired a new degree of fury from each virtue which discovered itself in his charming companion.

Tired out at length with being thus treated with harshness and indignity—thus watched even in her hours of repose—she took refuge in the house of her uncle, M. de Valois, with whom she still remains. It was from thence that she applied for, and obtained a separation, to which M. de Senanges, I know not from what motive, consented. She

offered either to go into a convent, or to remain with the respectable M. de Valois. He permitted her the latter asylum, and settled a pension on her, rather limited indeed, but which she accepted with rapture: it was the pledge of her liberty.

Since that period, Senanges has almost constantly resided in the province where he is governor; but he takes from time to time secret journies to Paris, to observe the conduct of his wife, and to enjoy, unknown to her, the rapture of beholding her; for this savage loves! he is punished for his jealousy by the torments of his passion. I have even been assured that he pants for a reconciliation with her. Of what strange contradictions is not the human heart capable!

Such, my friend, is the actual situation of the woman you love, but whom, if I have any power over your heart,

you must for ever renounce; yes, I repeat it, for ever.

You are young; a transient but lively inclination may have in your eyes all the characters of true passion to deceive her—to deceive yourself would be to involve you both in ruin. Besides, do not flatter yourself that you have undertaken an easy conquest. Madame de Senanges is fortified against love from all she has suffered, and from her own reflections in consequence of those sufferings. She groaned too long in bondage not to find happiness in the charms of independence. The galling chains which she dragged for seven years, have left on her soul an impression of fear, which will effectually prevent her charging herself with new ones. She now breathes at liberty, and she is happy.

To her eyes at present things the most indifferent assume the forms

of pleasures. Those public assemblies which she embellishes by her presence—those entertainments which she animates by her vivacity—that homage which she attracts by her charms—all please, all enchant her. She chuses rather to be amused than softened, dissipated than interested. Her long slavery has not hardened her heart, it has only armed it. A coquetry of instinct rather than of design, saves her from her sensibility, which would otherwise be fatal to her peace; or rather this coquetry is only a disguised sensibility, which not daring to concentrate itself in a single object, expands to different ones, and becomes flattering to many, without being dangerous to herself.

A woman who gives way to the tender sentiments of her heart for a favored lover, tastes no pleasures which are not connected with her passion: she who laughs at love, and defies his power,

enjoys all without risking any thing,—her trophies multiply in proportion as she is less pre-occupied. The heart is well defended which remains under the guard of self-love.

Do not imagine however, that the soul of Madame de Senanges limits itself to these frivolous amusements. She pays with interest on one side its privations on the other. Benevolence, which is her favorite propensity, furnishes her incessantly with pleasures as pure as the source from which they flow. Ostentation never mingles itself with the desire she has of being useful; she does good from the impulse of nature alone, and prefers the secret reward of self-approbation to the proud but empty gratification of worldly applause.

Such, my friend, is the estimable being whose repose you would disturb, and whose wisely-formed resolutions you would overthrow. Cease to en-

courage hopes as weak as they are presumptuous; they will never be realized, believe me they will not. You are amiable, attractive, deeply in love, perhaps; your charms, your graces, your love, will weigh but little with Madame de Senanges. Her's is a superior soul, tried by adversity, and happy only from the profound and delightful oblivion which saves her from that passion which disturbs your reason; or if you will, from those sentiments which fill your heart.

Thus do I warn you to cease from your cruel pursuit, from my certainty that it will not succeed; and my warning voice should be still more loudly exerted, could I conceive it possible it would be crowned with success. Accuse me not of advancing paradoxes.

What dreadful, eternal, and merited reproaches would you not make yourself, if after having attained your point

of rendering her susceptible to love, you should yourself one day cease to feel its power! You, Chevalier! could you be this barbarian! thus carry the ravages of despair into the bosom of tranquillity—snatch her new-found happiness from a respectable woman who had been so long a prey to misery—seduce her heart only to destroy her peace—and expose her to the horrors of finding herself forsaken, abandoned by you; a trial which would be inevitably followed by her death, and could only be expiated by yours!

But let us not anticipate a future so fraught with woes!—to recur to your present situation, are you at liberty to dispose of your affections? Do you believe that Madame d'Ercy will resign them without a violent struggle? that her offended pride will not reclaim the heart that would escape her? I will even suppose that Madame de Senanges

should listen to you: into what a labyrinth of evils would you lead her! I know the easiness of your nature; the clamors of the Marchioness would bear down all your best resolves; you would be recalled by a sense of her pretended benefits—you would cleave to her you no longer love—betray her who will perhaps have forfeited all for you—your vows will be broken, your honor wounded, and you, in consequence, supremely wretched!

"But I will break entirely with the Marchioness," you will say. You think so, but you deceive yourself; you would reproach yourself for your ingratitude—I have your own word for it.

But grant you were the most tender, the most faithful of lovers, Madame de Senanges would not the less be the most unfortunate of women. The piercing eyes of a jealous husband would follow all your steps, unveil every secret of

your hearts. He would have recourse to the laws for vengeance; and you would weep in tears of blood the ruin of your mistress, her and your dishonor, and the inefficacy of the counsels of your friend.

Arm yourself with firmness. The greater your love for Madame de Senanges, the more you are called upon to fly her: it is an effort worthy of you, and for which you will one day applaud yourself. It would wound me to the soul, that the woman most dear to me should be rendered miserable by the man I love the best. See her less frequently, till you find the fervor of your passion mellowed into friendship; you will then enjoy with delight a sentiment so much the more flattering, as it will be the price of a painful triumph, the pledge of a courageous heart. I embrace you with all mine.

## LETTER IX.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO THE BARON.

It is too late, Baron; my secret has escaped me; I love her, I have told her so, and I love her still the more. Far hence the gloomy lights of experience—I rejoice in my blindness, cherish my delirium—reason can do nothing for me. Certain of being miserable—miserable to the remotest term of my existence—I should be but the more confirmed in my sentiments. But what do I say! there is no real misfortune to be dreaded but the decay of love: the excess of that passion makes all supportable; mine obeys neither counsel nor control. I know not, if the *presentiments* of my heart deceive me, but the future has no terrors for me.

Though, you say, Madame de Senanges should return my love—If ever !——Oh God ! with that hope, what is there I would not surmount ! Dear Baron, I have need of a bosom where I may deposit my pains, my pleasures, my fears, my hopes. I have chosen your's, and I glory in my choice. I will tell you all that passes in this heart; but degrade me not by your pity: I am too much exalted by love to excite any sensations but those of envy. Love, in the degree which I feel it, is the perfection of humanity.

How beautiful is Madame de Senanges ! what a mind is her's ! I can never pronounce her name without an emotion, an agitation, a universal trembling. Her name sounds in unison with my heart. Ah, Baron ! your calm affords no joys equal to my perturbation ; I prefer it to every other ; and were I to be offered a long series of days peaceful

and serene, or a single one of happiness, that is to say, a single one in which I was assured of being beloved by the idol of my soul, I should have but one day to live.

## LETTER X.

FROM THE MARCHIONESS D'ERCY, TO THE CHEVALIER.

*The Chateau de* ***.

Do you know, Chevalier, you are become absolutely hateful to me? Upon my word I am very seriously displeased with you. A whole fortnight here, and you still stationary in that hideous, tiresome Paris, as if there was no inducement to call you elsewhere. But I shall not trouble myself to make you any reproaches. Wranglings kill me, and pouting is a wretched amusement. Come when it is agreeable to you, and do not flatter yourself that I shall make

the echoes resound with tender regrets for your absence. I am no rural shepherdess, as you know; and were I one, I should practice all the playfulness of village coquetry.

We have an entire universe here; and the Duchesse varies our amusements every day with the happiest skill. All the other females of our party have their *arrangements;* it is only I who am abandoned without pity, and who have the courage to laugh at it. We have the President's lady, who personates Saint Agnes, casts down her eyes in the prettiest manner, and calls up a blush whenever she thinks it necessary. What is singular in her character is, that with all this modesty, this little air of bashful timidity, she changes her lovers every day. Last night, after supper, she was asked to sing; she required ages of entreaties, practised all her grimaces, hid her face in her napkin, displayed a

thousand infantine graces, and concluded by singing with an air of the most perfect innocence, the most scandalous words in the world. The Baroness de *** is also here. She arrived a few days ago, escorted by her eternal spouse, who rolls like a ball in walking: and who, after having thus rolled the length of the parterre, harangues on the utility of exercise, and the pleasures of a country life. What a delicious anecdote have I to tell you of them! The morning after their arrival there was a wild boar chase. Pursued on all sides, and ready to be seized by the dogs, the animal sprung into an enclosure where the ladies all sat in their carriages to behold the sport, and run without ceremony to that of the Baroness, which he dashed against with all his force. She sent forth the most *execrable* shrieks, fainted away, or pretended to do so, and acted over all the affectation of

terror, of which nobody was the dupe. But this is not the pleasantest part of the history. In the evening, when we were all assembled in the saloon, while the parties were arranging, the great awkward Baron took it into his head to approach her when her back was turned, and, would you believe it? the intolerable creature renewed the scene of the morning, and feigned to believe that she was again assaulted by the wild boar. In vain we all assured her that it was only her husband; she persisted in taking him for the savage beast; and to confess the truth, in my heart I gave her some credit for the mistake. To complete our misfortunes, there is fallen among us a sort of second-rate noble, who thinks himself profound because he never had vivacity enough to be frivolous. This man has the maniac of verse making; he passes his miserable effusions for such. The poor creature

writes prose without knowing it. He lays down to you, with the tone of a legislator, the grand principles of seduction; despises women; and sets up for a philosopher.

I have forgot to mention a descendant of the shepherd *Celadon*, who has his bloom, his insipidity, and piques himself on being his counterpart in soul. He burns respectfully for subaltern divinities, whose hands he is proud to kiss. His worship is diverting: he believes himself the sacrificing priest, whilst he is but the victim. When he speaks he excites smiles of contempt, which he imagines are produced by the pleasure of listening to him. Always satisfied with himself, rarely so with others, he makes them feel the shafts of his ridicule; he flatters himself at least that he does so; they give him credit for the intention, and pay him back with usury; of this he is quite

unconscious. Did he consult nature more, he might perhaps have wit; but he would not be near so amusing.

There, Chevalier, you have the exact portraits of some of the originals who divert me here; but these hasty and superficial observations do not prevent me giving my attention to those more weighty objects which demand it. I forward my dispatches every morning, and move the great springs of state, from the recess of my dressing-room. I hold correspondence with all the offices; not a minister who does not know my signature, not a secretary or clerk who does not respect it. I suggest ideas, they are opposed; I discuss their propriety, and they are adopted; and in always asserting my claims, I sometimes obtain even more than I demanded.

We every day expect M. de ***. You know the influence he has over

public affairs. I must have a *conference* with him, in which you shall not be forgotten. But, what an incomparable man you are! whilst I torment myself with projects for your advantage, you testify a tranquillity on the subject which I cannot help admiring! Awake, my good Chevalier, if you please: really your delicacy is ridiculous, your probity *cruelly* gothic. For my part, I do not esteem my age enough to take so many measures to conciliate it. Cast your eyes for a moment over the view which society now offers; you will see personal interest every where predominate; your *gigantic* principles fade into nothing in the picture. Each individual is intriguing, ambitious, selfish; there are none of those timorous consciences which stops you in your mid-career, and prevents your reaching the gaol of your wishes. Philosophy, Chevalier, follow philosophy! She extends the ideas be-

yond the vulgar limits, obviates those tremendous scruples which retard the steps, annihilate resources, and weigh the free-born soul down to the centre. Before her bright beams prejudices disappear, as well as all those little virtues of convention to which none now give credit. Do you not know that in this age of illumination, morals have undergone an entire change? Conform to the times: in the general ruin do you as others, seize upon your share of the wreck; look once again, and you will blush for your timidity. What inferior beings usurp those places which pertain only to genius! how many dwarfs upon pedestals! Enter the lists, were it only from indignation, and to snatch from folly what is due only to wit and talents. How has my enthusiasm carried me away! I exhaust myself in preaching to you, and you will not profit by it. You are terribly provoking! Endeavour

to tear yourself from your *delightful* Paris, and come amongst us. I have too much self-love to give way to any fears for your constancy; and too much frankness to answer for my own, if you continue to conduct yourself with this degree of nonchalance. Make your own reflections on all this, and take care you leave me not time for mine. I am terribly to be dreaded when I reflect.

Oh! I had almost forgot to tell you, we made a visit the other day at the Chateau de ***. We met a number of females there, not one of them worth the trouble of mentioning, unless it be the Vicomtesse de Senanges. The men of our party have taken it into their heads to cry her up to a ridiculous degree; they talk in raptures of her beauty, which I could not perceive; and assert that numberless sallies of wit escaped her in the course of conversation, none of which I heard. Strictly

speaking, this woman may be in some points barely passable, but certainly the *tout ensemble* is not to be admired. She is horridly awkward, yet I dare swear she piques herself on possessing the graces! She should be undeceived. Charge yourself with this care, Chevalier, should you ever meet her. Meet her? No, I imagine there is little chance of that; she certainly does not appear in the circles you frequent. She has not been *presented,* nor, as I understand, has she any pretensions to be so: her's is called an existence of a very equivocal nature. Inform yourself of it I beseech you; and should an opportunity offer to mortify her, for my sake let it not escape you. Justice should be done. Adieu.

## LETTER XI.

FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

I AM faithful to my promise, and send you, Monsieur, that happy Madame de Lambert, who was correct without effort, and who wished to teach all her sex to become so. Read her book, and read it with attention, and then tell me whether you think women can be justified in loving; or whether men, the generality of them at least, are worthy of that sentiment. I know there are exceptions; but to make them, might be a latitude dangerous in the application. Madame de Lambert admitted of no exceptions. What a soul must she have received from nature! the virtues seem to have cost her no exertion. I studied her precepts before I went to bed, not-

withstanding my promise to you. Yes, I cannot be guilty of a falsehood, I have read the book, and perhaps I should have done well to keep it as my guardian treasure.

## LETTER XII.

FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

I AM this moment returned home, Monsieur, more fatigued than amused by the manner in which I have past the day. I arose rather early; went to dine at the the convent; from thence to sup in the country; and then such a dismal party at whist! with a partner who was ill-humour personified. I played very ill; my mind generally wanders from my cards; this the gentleman did not understand; he said people ought to attend to their game. He recapitulated all my

blunders; oh! what a task he had, and made such a noise, such an uproar, as quite alarmed me. This man must be harsh and severe by character. I respected his age, however, as much as if I had been born at Lacedæmon; for he is old as time, and gloomy as this lowering day. At length, here I am, where I have just read your billet, which has led my mind to much more agreeable subjects. I feel how much I am below the praises you lavish on me; yet there are moments in which I find myself exalted by them, not from any high opinion they give me of myself, but from that I have of my panegyrist. Those moments of self-delusion, however, are short; reflection steps in, and leads me back to truth. You are polite, indulgent, perhaps partial; but your suffrage, all-precious as it is to me, does not prevent my feeling my deficiences. Yes, I do myself justice, so far I have

merit. It is difficult to be proof against praise when it is you who bestow it.

## LETTER XIII.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

I HAVE just got your second billet, which informs me that I cannot see you to-day. There remains for me then only the pleasure of conversing with you in this way, to which I shall dedicate my evening.

I have at length obtained the perusal of your boasted Madame Lambert, that endless pedant who erects indifference into system; who feeling nothing herself, would annihilate feeling in others; who exclaims against love because she never inspired it, and preaches reason to us, probably because she was never tempted to deviate from it. You shall

not long possess this *preceptor* of insensibility. I will burn a leaf every day in honor of the Deity whose name she has profaned, and whom you abjure through her means. With what intent has this woman written thus? and how am I enraged at her for it! I am no longer astonished at the severity of your morals, the cruelty of your principles: it is with those of Madame de Lambert that your heart is armed; and every night, alas! you place your arms under your pillow, doubtless to fright away even those dreams which might trace in your mind the delights of a tender attachment. But what do I say! I should be but too happy did I owe your opposition only to a book, of which, in time, the impression might be destroyed. Your heart has need only of its own impulse when it combats against me. Moralists may say what they will: nature has given to woman only courage sufficient

to resist for a time; they never gain a complete victory when they bear in their own bosoms the enemy they would overcome. Were you less insensible, I would return you the volume, nor should I have any thing to dread from it. I am but too certain of it, your boasted reason is nothing more than indifference —indifference—what a word!—I cannot trace it without feeling the full extent of my misfortune! I repeat it to you, Madame, you are the sole, the sacred object of my soul's affections. I breathe, think, act only by you. There never escapes you a look which does not make its way to my heart, a word which is not graven there, a wish which does not become its strongest, sweetest law. Yes, doubtless I will keep my promise; I will be all that you would have me, that is a very wretch! My passion is so truly delicate, that the transports to which it gives birth must

bear the same character. The privations of my heart are enjoyments for your's; I will then impose them to the most rigorous extreme; and I shall be rewarded for the cruel efforts of obedience by the pleasure of having obeyed.

Never were perturbations equal to those I experience; yet I will own to you there is mingled with these transports the most extatic pleasure I have ever tasted, that of knowing myself susceptible of a passion which will perhaps drive me to despair. Recoil not from the expression of an attachment so sincere: and before your charming eyes shall be closed in sleep, turn them with some degree of interest on this letter, however long it may appear to you. Take your heart to task; persuade it to open to the soft emotions of love; and may that love watch over your thoughts whilst you sleep; may it chase from your soul fear, suspicion, all those

monsters which surround it, guard its passes, and cruelly bar my entrance.

To-morrow, Madame, are you to remain absent to-morrow? what then is to become of me? I cannot finish my letter—how heavily drag on the hours when I am deprived of the happiness of seeing you! My head turns round. Pity me, Madame, and pardon the confusion of my ideas, which springs solely from the ardor of my love.

## LETTER XIV.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

What a letter, and what angelic goodness! You knew that your absence would cast the gloom of sadness over the day; but you have contrived the means to gild that gloom, or at least to render it more supportable to me.

These are miracles which souls of delicacy alone know how to perform. The more I contemplate your's, the more do I discover those perfections which in spite of yourself shine through the veil of modesty, and yield a proud triumph to those who know how to appreciate their lustre. Your heart is opened to me—you have honored me with your confidence—my love is amply rewarded.

I think, with M. de Valois, that a woman cannot enjoy happiness without the esteem of others; nor without that peace of mind which results from the practice of her duties. But as honorable attachment excludes neither these nor any of those acts of mild benevolence so adapted to the female character; it even supposes then all, since it cannot exist independent of virtue. Such is my moral creed, and such I am convinced is your's. Your reason may disguise, but cannot destroy your

belief in these truths. Yes, trust me, Madame, the instinctive impulses of a heart inspired by love, have more power to regulate the conduct, than all the sage dictates of the deepest reflection. We applaud this imperious reason who comes to offer herself as our guide, but we follow her not; and we condemn the precipitate decisions of the heart, whilst we execute its laws.

This is what we see happen every day, but which can never apply to you; never, alas! I am but too certain of it! But I complain not: to-day I can complain of nothing. You have found out the secret of conferring happiness on me in spite of your absence. Ah! talk to me no more of reason: a single look from you is of more value to me than all the counsels she could give.

## LETTER XV.

FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

You promised me, Monsieur, that you would take the steps necessary for procuring the appointment to the place of——. Have you kept your word with me? Your neglect of what concerns your interest gives me serious uneasiness. You do not shew yourself enough at court; and nothing can be expected in that region, but from perseverance and importunity. Patrons there are apt to slumber, when there are no pains taken to arouse them; and the best friends of to-day are often no longer so to-morrow. You have dangerous competitors, not from the solidity of their pretensions, but from the warmth of their pursuit: mediocrity is always

active; merit too often indolent. Shall we go to see the new opera? or is it to be acted to-morrow? Have the goodness to inquire. Good—here is a transition from affairs of state to the frivolities of a theatre! Such are women! How do contraries succeed each other in their minds! Sometimes philosophers, at others infants: by turns solid, and trifling—giddy and reflecting. Just from instinct, frank by nature, dissembling by system; frivolous because they are ill educated; ignorant because no pains have been taken to inform them; apparently weak, yet more courageous than your sex when called upon by great occasions; their minds capable of the highest degree of cultivation, though you give them credit only for their graces; now sacrificing pleasure to study, again flying from the most serious reading to the arrangement of a head-dress! Is not this their true

description? But who is to blame? If, in spite of all our faults, we behold mankind at our feet; if they even prefer those faults to our greatest virtues; if science is doubtful, sentiment the only true guide to happiness, we have nothing to envy you, nothing to regret for ourselves. In short, say what you will of us; the less consistency of character we possess, the more interesting we become to you, were it only from the heightening effect of contrast. What a letter have I written! It will certainly weary you to death. I do not often give way to moralizing reflections; I know not how it has happened now. You find me uncommonly serious to-day—Alas! yes, I am so—Adieu, Monsieur.

## LETTER XVI.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

DARE I demand of you, Madame, why you speak so much ill of your sex? It is singular that I should have the task of defending them against you. For my part I find them most admirable philosophers; that they possess prudence proof against all trials; what calm in their hearts—what courage to combat those sentiments which they inspire! Ah, how weak is our reason! how powerful their imbecility! They sport with those passions which torment us; make us believe all they wish, refuse us any degree of faith in return; plunge us in despair, and then forget us. We have both undertaken to draw portraits;

but I willingly become the champion of your sex. You are a proof that they can attain to perfection.

Very well, Madame, I shall take the necessary steps for my promotion, since you require it of me; I should feel myself culpable in not obeying you. Heavens! how sweet to say to myself I act only by her orders! If I desire honors, it is only that I may look up to her as their source; she purifies my self-interest by making it subservient to my love!

Yes, all those pursuits which have not you for their incentive, are become foreign to my nature. What, alas! is glory when the heart is void? when, insulted by pride, it enjoys not that glory in the bosom of a beloved object? Ambition is only the refuge of frozen souls, who having neither virtues to invite, nor sentiments which impel

them to look at home, seek abroad for whatever can best promote the end of flying from themselves.

I am truly grateful for the interest you deign to take in what concerns me; since friendship makes you think and write with so much delicacy, still must I thank it; stifle each fond complaint, and adore that generous soul which contains every amiable sentiment except that which would be the perfection of them all.

## LETTER XVII.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

You defend the cause of women so well, that I cannot refuse you a tribute of my gratitude. *How weak is our reason*, say you; *and how powerful their imbecility!* the magnificent elogy! It

displays to perfection the modesty of your sex. Give me leave, however, if you please, to observe, that these boasted men shine more by their reasoning powers than by the display of reason in their conduct. They analyze what we practice; frame unjust laws for us, which we condemn, even in submitting to them: they are either our slaves or our tyrants, we their tender friends; they find it easier to be despots than models, to command us than their own passions. In short, those weak beings, as they affect to call us, whom they persecute, whom they deceive, whom they despise, and whom they adore, rise superior to their masters by that powerful attraction which is beyond power itself. Yes, usurpers as they are, we deign not to break our chains; we have the courage, and perhaps the pride to wear them. Let them enjoy their triumph: to reign over ourselves is our noblest

praise. To reign over ourselves! ah! how easy does this appear in theory—happy, happy should we be could we still retain this blest dominion! What pity do I feel for those whose struggles often serve for no other purpose but to add strength to what they would destroy! join with me in pitying them, Monsieur! The object of our affections, however sincere, however virtuous, is not the less susceptible of change. The more ardent the love, the more is its decay to be dreaded, if it is one of the misfortunes of human nature to become soonest weary of what we had the most ardently desired, if in attaining what had appeared to us the highest good—all the charms which had attracted us should vanish, if—ah! my God, how many *ifs!* I only wished to have my own sex appear superior to your's; to what lengths has this fancy led me!

## LETTER XVIII.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

Ah! of how many faults have not men been guilty? far be it from me to attempt defending them all. But if there be one, a single one amongst them who in beginning to love has sworn to love for ever—who bears his sufferings with a kind of voluptuous pleasure, rather than offend the object of that love; will you not grant me that such a one merits an exemption from the general stigma on the sex? Well, Madame, such a one does exist, and doubtless you must be conscious of it; but you can see all, yet be sensible to nothing. I know what belongs to love. *To reign over yourself*, this is then the triumph which flatters you! But why this painful

combat of prejudice against happiness? The most ardent love, you say, is most liable to decay. Ah! not when you are the beloved object. With you it is impossible to escape the seductions of love; with you constancy must become a source of the most supreme felicity. To you, Madame, I yield myself entire, you must form the fate of my future life. I do not attempt to reason, but I feel with vivacity. I love you to excess, I never see you without an increase to my passion; and I prefer the torments of which you are the cause, to happiness if bestowed by any other.

## LETTER XIX.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

You will go to England then, you will quit me! how much more tender is my

friendship than your love! How do I hate that love which can render people unjust, and even cruel! is it not cruelty, this desire to deprive your friends of your society? Ah! had you not to-day expressed a wish that I had been placed in a state the most obscure, how would you have fallen in my opinion! But your motives for that wish were so delicate, it displayed your heart in such amiable colors, that mine is divided between the sincerest gratitude, and an anger equally just against that *English whim* which seized you yesterday you say. Yesterday! and why? Because I admitted people on whose account I was sure the public could form no suspicions. I will not explain to you my reasons for this conduct—I do not own them to myself—I shut my eyes against the light in many points. Ah! they are yet but too open. You speak to me sometimes of ob-

scurity: yes, it is often adopted with propriety. Is then the situation of our sex so enviable? our every trivial action is watched with the most scrutinizing observation, and even should we wish to live for one sole object, have we the power to do so? Dull visits, splendid and tiresome suppers, parties of pleasure where pleasure exists but in name, which, far from satisfying the soul, leaves behind nothing but a horrid void; such is the happiness of women, such the routine with which it is supposed we are all intoxicated. Happy are those who seek for nothing beyond amusement, and who find it in this life of dissipation; who lead it from taste, not from system; who use it not as a resource to preserve them from an attachment of which they fear the excess, the pains, the remorse, or the exposure.

I have the misfortune to be obliged to go on a visit to ***. I did not dare

refuse; I paused, I feared, I reflected, and said yes. And you are convinced that this arrangement enchants me. Very well, so much the better, believe it still.—Good night, Monsieur.

## LETTER XX.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

I AM now, indeed, Madame, supremely happy!—this is the first favor I have received at your hands, but how sweet, how precious is it to my heart! Have I then indeed inspired you with some degree of interest, and would my absence inflict pain on your friendship? I shall think no more of my journey to London. What, shall I quit you? voluntarily place seas between us! I who cannot support without torture a single day's absence from you, who

would live at your feet, who would feel a hundred deaths in being separated from you! No, it can never be! Weary of frivolity, I sought a woman worthy to fix my affections; I have found her, and I desire nothing more. The sole reproach I have to make you is your attracting all eyes. Yes, yes, I repeat it, I would have you less brilliant, less fascinating; I should then have fewer alarms, because your heart, that heart so noble, so estimable, would be more at your own disposal; I should not have to dispute it with so many adorers, with such universal homage, with such powerful allurements of every description. Lustre of charms is sometimes hurtful to solidity of sentiment: self-love, amused and flattered, would indemnify itself for the loss of true pleasures, of those whose source is in the soul, of those only which are formed for you. But how inadequate the sub-

stitute, how poor the indemnification! What talk you of fears, or of remorse?—What can you fear whilst beautiful and adored?—What remorse can arise from a passion delicate, virtuous, and sincere? Your heart is too easily alarmed. Should you ever love, you must be happy, permanently happy.

As for me, I am at the summit of my wishes; your letter has intoxicated me with joy, and the extacy with which it has inspired me, can find no expressions equal to the extent of my gratitude.

## LETTER XXI.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

I AM no longer surprized, Monsieur, that you have sometimes quitted me so abruptly, nor that you yesterday refused to comply with my pressing desire that

we should pass the rest of the evening together. No, nothing at present would have power to astonish me. Engagements earlier formed, more dear, the sole perhaps which interest you, called you elsewhere; and I who was quite ignorant of their force, I wished—I believed—But I no longer wish, I no longer believe any thing. I learned many things at the house where I supped: your constancy was much praised, and it would no doubt be a virtue, if with a heart full of one object, you had not sought to disturb the repose of another. When I spoke my sentiments against men, had you known what an infinite distance I placed between you and the rest of your sex! Oh, heavens, I was deceived! I could never have imagined it. Yet after all, of what importance is it?—Ah! how happy am I that I have felt nothing more tender than friendship!

## LETTER XXII.

### FROM THE BARON, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

If I write to you but rarely, my lovely friend, trust me it is more from discretion than neglect. What would a recluse, who cultivates his fields, and who pays very little attention even to the neighbourhood which surrounds him, have to say that could amuse you? But all-rustic as I may appear to you, believe me I think of you often, and always with a tender interest. We may lose sight of persons who are only handsome; we can never forget those who are amiable: you are both the one and the other; I remember it marvellously well, and the recluse at times allows himself to be carried away by the recollections of the man of the world. Your

idea mingles with the appearance of a morning sweetly fresh, of a serene day; in a word, with all the smiling objects which the variegated scenes of the country present. You always keep your place in the assemblage of beauties held out to me by nature.

The praises of an inhabitant of the country are simple as the scenes which surround him. Well, perhaps this will make them only the more interesting to you, as the odours which exhale from our meadows are more grateful to the senses, than those compound and subtle perfumes which intoxicate and overpower them, and in the end pall by their luscious sweetness.

The good M. de Valois, from time to time, writes me news of you. I know through him that you are still free, still rational, consequently still happy. Ah! may you long preserve, may you never abandon that system of independence

for which you are indebted to your misfortunes, as much as to reflection. Never allow yourself to be seduced by the flatteries and homage of our sex, they are only masks for perfidy. Enjoy the triumphs of your beauty, inhale the incense it attracts, but beware of being intoxicated by it. With that sensibility of soul I know you to possess, you must be lost should you cease to be indifferent. I am no pedant who declaims in favor of prejudices; I am the most tender of friends, and it is your cause I plead.

Rely upon my judgment: in the silence of the passions, and of all those little interests which they create and multiply, I have leisure to observe deeply, and to form conclusions with precision. Your situation, the susceptibility of your heart, the rectitude of your principles, all forbid your forming a tender attachment. Your chains would appear light

at first, but they would in time become a galling weight.

Yet after all, how needless is it to warn you against love! Men, such as they are in the present day, are your security against themselves, much more than my counsels, or perhaps than your own principles. Heavens! what a degenerate race! How vain, how inconsiderate; haughty without elevation, cruel without energy! They have lost even that national characteristic, that effervescence of courage which formerly it was necessary to repress, but which at present it is in vain to endeavour to arouse. The fire of youth no longer impels them to those nobly brilliant faults, which give the promise even of virtues at a riper age. Their souls lulled to sleep by vice, awake only to pitiful emulation, and become totally corrupt by the force of mutual example.

In this despicable vortex, who can

hope to meet a being worthy the title of lover, one capable of esteeming the object of his love, and of loving with a passion, a sincerity equal to that esteem! But if by rare chance one were to be found whose soul had escaped the general contagion, who attracts notice and regard by an assemblage of personal graces and estimable qualities.—Ah! above all others, be upon your guard against such a one. It is an attachment of the heart that I dread above all for you, and the man most likely to inspire it, is he you ought most carefully to shun. In a lover the most honorable, the ardency of his passion, even its sincerity, is no pledge for its duration. All the difference between him and others is, that he will weep his illusion—that he will regret what he abandons—that he will continue to love, even while he quits her, the object who no longer intoxicates his senses. Alas!

this is only adding to the pangs of a susceptible heart, where life and love are twined together, and which is still the more strongly attached by the sacrifices which have been made. Of what avail are the tears of an ingrate, who refuses to wipe away those he has caused to flow? Of what avail mere expressions of compassion for a woman rendered thus miserable after having been accustomed to a degree of idolatry, to the delirium of sentiment, and to the pride of having reigned in his heart without a rival.

This is but too faithful a picture, and will I am certain make the wished impression on you. It is in hearts such as your's that love sinks the deepest, makes the most dreadful ravages; it merely glides over those corrupted by vice. Women always love in proportion to their virtue. How fatally menacing then for you!

Believe me, we are not worth the risk of an attachment. Besides, nature is in nothing so contradictory, as in the union between the two sexes; men love best before they have experienced your favors; women after: how can this ever accord? Enter into all the elegant amusements of the gay world, continue to be the ornament and delight of society, and behold all mankind captive at your feet without resigning an atom of your own liberty. Adieu, my charming friend: you have experienced misfortunes from necessity and compulsion; add not to them those of your own free choice: for these alone there is no consolation.

## BILLET.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

I CALLED yesterday at your door, in hopes of paying my respects to you, but was told you were gone out. I perceived however that the carriage of the Marquis *** was in waiting there. It must have been some blunder of your servants—how am I bound to execrate them! they deprived me of the happiness of seeing you; to-day I hope I shall be more fortunate.

## BILLET.

FROM THE CHEVALIER.

EIGHT days successively have I presented myself at your door, without

being able to gain admittance, whilst the Marquis—Pardon my distraction—Oh, heavens! what a future do I anticipate!—Can you?—but no—Yet you fly me, you do not even answer my letters—What coldness! what contempt! Have I merited this?—

## BILLET.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER.

For a moment I forget all my own misfortunes, to think only of your interests. Learn, Madame, the reports which are circulated, and which have excited my warmest indignation. It is said that the Marquis—I will die rather than believe it; but the public, the inexorable public! silence its calumnies, watch over your own reputation, and if it is necessary, overwhelm me with an added weight of misery. The Mar-

quis !—is it possible he can have touched your heart !—You are perhaps ignorant ! —Know him then such as he is. I send you a letter written by him some months since ; I betray no confidence by doing so, for he has himself given many copies of it. You will there see the opinion he has of your sex ; you will see his system of profligacy as to what regards them ; you will see, in short, and judge whether you ought even to allow him to approach you.

*Copy of a Letter from the Marquis ***, to the Chevalier de ***.*

Art thou turned fool, Chevalier, with thy sermons which thou qualifies with the appellation of counsels, and with thy intolerance on all that regards gallantry ? Thou wouldst have us sigh without end, never deceive, act with candour and sincerity, and towards

whom I beseech you? towards women! My poor Chevalier! sincerity with beings whose very essence is artifice; who value love much more for the stratagems it suggests, than for the enjoyments it bestows! Thou wilt bring thyself off with exceptions; I will believe there are such, if thou exactest it of me; but, shall I tell thee truth? I have never met with one.

As to the pleasure of changing, thou hast had too little experience in that way, my good friend, to discuss the point with me. The most fickle are beyond contradiction the most of philosophers; and this philosophy is marvellously adopted by that charming sex, of whom thou art the tender apologist.

A savage, governed by the impulse of nature, changes to satisfy the caprices of his temperament; a politic woman from prudence: both pursue the same end, act from the same principle, and

employ the same means, as the most sure in each case. There is no character which inconstancy does not suit. The coquette changes by system: she seems to multiply her charms in multiplying her adorers. The prude, from equity; she imposes upon herself so many exterior privations, that it is but common justice the inferior should not also suffer; nothing in the world exacts more indulgences than the interior of a pride. The giddy find their account in it; there are always some moments of happiness which they lay hold of as they run their race. The voluptuous woman, (and I could cite thee the opinions of all that we have most superior in that class,) have sworn to me in moments of confidence, that nature loses nothing, and voluptuousness gains much by it.

Thou seest I support myself upon respectable authorities; and besides, I

have had in this point an uninterrupted practice, which completes the evidence of my reasonings. Here then are women decided inconstants. Why the devil wouldst thou have us less so? That romantic sentiment, of which thou speakest, when carried to a certain excess, is in some sort the annihilation of the soul; it extinguishes that fire which thou pretendest it concentrates; it lays it asleep, deprives it of motion, of life; and I know nothing, unless it is a new object, that can restore its powers. Again I repeat it, those hearts must be in a desperate situation on which an infidelity cannot have a salutary effect.

What then becomes of virtue? thou wilt say. She must do the best she can, Chevalier: to thee it appears the height of virtue to die of wearisomeness and languor—to adhere to a yoke which is become galling—to pique our-

selves upon a heroism only fit for vulgar souls—and to become brutishly stupid from an excess of delicacy. Canst thou conceive any thing of more oppressive weight than a chain which retains you, when pleasure calls another way? Life is brief as the lightning's flash, our tastes should resemble it, be brilliant and rapid as that. Thou hast perhaps sometimes met in society couples calling themselves lovers, who had been arranged for ages, but who in secret hated each other most cordially, yet still acted fondness from ostentation, and to give the varnish of decency to their connection: dost thou not agree with me that these patterns of exemplary love are truly disgusting to a man of the least reflection, and who has made the human heart at all his study.

I wish pain of banishment were to to be inflicted on all those couples whose mutual passion exists beyond

three weeks. I am always on my guard against those too tender fair ones who weary us with endless dissertations on a lasting attachment, on the intercourse of souls, and all the commonplace trumpery of the ancient gallantry. Those-reasoners are often much more perfidious than others. Heaven bless the giddy souls, who stay not to reason! Your *theologians* in sentiment, are to the heart, what the most limpid water is to the palate of a drunkard: so insipidly refined! You languish in their arms, and thirst for something else.

Thou who art so ridiculous as to assert that it is *monstrous* to be unfaithful, knowst thou that it is necessary to be so even for the sake of the woman thou lovest. Hast thou a mistress whom nothing disturbs, nothing alarms? sure of thy homage, convinced of thy attachment, she accepts the proofs with tranquillity, that is to say, without grati-

tude. A tranquil mistress is not far from becoming a cold one. Her security begets presumption, she depends upon the power of her charms, regards love as a debt, and believes her lover but too happy when allowed to acquit himself of it. Thou art dear to her I will grant thee, if thou wilt; but thou ceasest to be interesting; she is no longer anxious to please, will be obliging or otherwise, just as she is in the humor; but thinks herself always sufficiently amiable; she trusts for every thing to the violence of thy passion, till in the end her own becomes totally extinct. Give her a rival; all the powers of her soul will be awakened, will be re-animated: hatred towards the object who has robbed her of thy heart, will bring into action her love for thee, which had only slumbered; thou wilt again become necessary to her happiness; sleepless nights will ensue, then come the charm-

ing billets of the morning—rage, despair, tears; and how irresistible is weeping beauty! To give the dear creatures room to display the full lustre of their charms, they must be tormented; it gives an edge to their wit, energy to their souls, and new graces to their native loveliness. Forsaken females are themselves astonished at the resources of their own minds; they will do infinitely more to bring back a truant heart, than they had done at first to enslave it; in short, I think them only truly lovely when they are completely miserable. What follows? consolations are offered and listened to; arguments discussed, and their force admitted; the connection is fresh arranged, and all is again for a term, peace and joy.

Besides, a woman, even when forced to make a new choice, ought to feel eternal gratitude towards the lover who procures her the inexpressible happiness

which vengeance can bestow. My philosophy is consistent, I will answer for it; I change to indulge myself, and to oblige others. I scarcely ever, for a single instant, remain under the force of the same impression. When, by chance, I go to any of the theatres, I generally carry with me three or four different objects of attention; which occupy my mind, exercise my powers, and prevent my sinking into lassitude; I brave her whom I have last deserted, I ogle the beauty I wish next to captivate, and I torment the present possessor of my heart. Here is full employment for all the time between the acts. My unceasing vivacity fixes all the bright eyes on me; some extol, others rail at me; all make me the subject of conversation, and in fact, she who has not held me in chains, knows not yet all her resources.

One of my favorite whims is, to make

women do extraordinary things; it is only falling in with their humours in a certain degree, and you may lead them to any pitch of extravagance; and when once bent on distinguishing themselves by any striking singularity, the most timid and reserved become intrepid.

I have had for about a fortnight past, (the affair begins to grow rather stale) a little *friend* who is nothing more than a breath of air; it is the most brittle-looking individual I ever beheld; she seems as if ready to shiver in pieces by a single touch. Her character is as feeble as her person is slender, delicate, and weak; she fears every thing, never goes to the theatres lest she should be pressed to death; dreads even the Colisçée (where nobody goes) because of the crowd. Very well, this being, so fearful, so little formed to bustle through an affair of gallantry, has had the courage to enlist me in her service, to

retain me there; and if I do not make haste, will (for her intention is good) fix me her own for a tedious length of time. But I will recount to thee a curious anecdote of her, which may serve as a history illustrative of all the females of the present age.

The divinity whom I have been describing to thee has taken it into her head to be passionately fond of music; I boasted much of the excellence of a band which I occasionally employed, and invited her to a tete â tete meeting at my own house, where we might enjoy her favorite amusement, even to extacy; she consented, and full of the idea, was impatient for an opportunity of realizing it. We fixed on a night, and for the pleasure of having difficulties to overcome, we chose that which offered the greatest number. She was invited to supper at the house of the young Duchesse de ***, where

was to be a numerous assembly, and where her husband also was to be of the party. How elude his suspicions? I again repeat it, in the hour of trial, nothing is equal to a *timid* woman; she will undertake and perform prodigies of valor. The Duchesse was admitted into her confidence; two females could not be long in concerting means to deceive a husband; after that every thing became easy. Supper was announced, the company seated themselves at table, when my heroine was taken suddenly ill, fell into fainting fits, accompanied with convulsions, and in short, acted her part to a miracle. The guests all arose to fly to her assistance, but the intelligent Duchesse took her under her own care, had her conducted to her apartment, and dismissed her attendants; she then let her out by a secret passage constructed for her own convenience, and entrusted her with the

key of a door by which she might escape, if she met with any obstacle. After this dexterous manœuvre, she returned to her company, informed them that the sick lady was much better, and turning to the husband, said, " Be perfectly easy, Monsieur, I will send your wife home to-morrow in the best health imaginable."

Thou mayst now behold the pretty pilgrim buried under a large huge cloak and hood, confined in very tight slippers, and exposed to all the nocturnal gaieties of those amiable libertines who at that hour traverse Paris; trembling, quaking, tottering at every step, and from agony to agony, making her way to my enchanted castle. I waited for her at the end of the street where I live; I recognized my little traveller at some distance, and at length received her more dead than alive into my arms. I led her through several long and dark galleries,

(for the lamps had been discreetly extinguished) and conducted her with a degree of magic precaution to the recesses of my apartment, which appeared as if decorated by the hands of love. The play of lights, multiplied by reflection from several large mirrors, a collection of exquisite paintings, all spoke it the abode of the graces.

My clarionets then began to sound, and the whole band struck up a concert of the most ravishing harmony. The first airs were soft, slow, and interrupted at intervals; till by degrees it swelled into the fullest tones of melody.

After this prelude, the supper appeared, as if by fairy hands, from under a covered recess in the apartment, on a table decked with flowers, and lighted up by girandoles. Thou mayst well imagine that never was supper more delicate, more exquisite. Whilst it lasted, the music was lively, gay, exhilarating, and

at times even bacchanalian. In short, it lasted in varied tones and measures during the whole of the night, and my beautiful and enraptured mistress would willingly have prolonged the entertainment, but the morning which began to dawn informed us it was time to put an end to it. I re-conducted her to the house of her friend, and during our walk, she owned to me ingenuously, that never concert had so well amused her. On the morrow she was sent home to her simpleton of a spouse, and the most entertaining part of the affair is, that she forced the silly man to write to the Duchesse, returning thanks for the service she had done him, and for the very particular care she had taken of his wife.

Thou mayst well imagine that this brilliant sally put an end to the intrigue. It is impossible after this evening that

Madame de *** should ever achieve any thing *poignant*. I have already reaped all I could hope for from the connection; and I shall give her back to society with my whole heart. Confess now, Chevalier, that in a thousand years thy refinement of sensibility would not yield thee pleasures so animated, so interesting, and above all, so new.

Adieu.—I wished for once to initiate thee into mysteries unknown to vulgar lovers. This letter is a kind of code which I design one day to publish, for the encouragement of ladies, and the information of gentlemen. We ought to enlighten our age, and to merit the glorious title of citizen.

## LETTER XXIII.

FROM THE MARCHIONESS D'ERCY, TO THE CHEVALIER DE VERSENAI.

Oh! the excellent discovery! Fear nothing, Chevalier: I will be discreet; I will respect the motive of your *sojourn* at Paris, and the secret of your amours. You are then faithless! I could never have believed it. More, however, from a just opinion of myself, than from any confidence I placed in you. But what amuses me most of all is, that it should be Madame de Senanges you have given me for a rival! You must have laughed heartily at my last letter. I addressed myself to the lover of that woman, to confide to him all the ill I thought of her; it is to her *knight* that I gave in charge to punish her unfounded vanity. Into what a snare have you led me!

The affair, it must be confessed, has been most dexterously managed; I did not imagine you master of so much address. I am your dupe; no small subject of triumph for you let me assure you; dupes such as me are but rare. Of us two I had supposed that I should be the first to break off the connection; you have anticipated me, and this has inspired me with the most profound respect for you. You expected, perhaps, that I should have overwhelmed you with reproaches! by no means; I am not naturally of a persecuting spirit; I take things more gaily. Besides, too many objects of weighty importance occupy my attention, to leave me time to act despair by system, I have not any spare minutes to bewail the terrible misfortune of being *crossed in love.* This *sang-froid* is no doubt very mortifying to you, but it is very comfortable to myself; and upon the terms we now are, it is but just we

should be equally at our ease. You will easily believe that in the cruelly forlorn state in which you have left me, I shall be long without comforters. As I am yet *infinitely* young, have not fallen entirely into the shade, and although not beautiful as Madame de Senanges, I am told my form and face are tolerably passable; I give myself no alarms as to my future fate, and console myself for your crime; (for women, I know not why, call inconstancy a crime) I console myself, I say, by the facility of vengeance.

However, as a remains of interest speaks to me still in your favor, I will out of charity inform you of what an odious public whispers on the subject of your new choice. Her youth is not disputed, for she has all the unformed and awkwardess that belongs to it, and it would be wrong to cavil with her on that article; but she is reproached with

being any thing but natural, and with a rage for affecting the child in manners. Nothing, it is said, unless it be her mind, is more artificial than her complexion, and there are besides mysteries of the toilette, into which it does not become us to penetrate. It was asserted to me the other day, and I was quite furious on the subject, that her gentleness is nothing but hypocrisy, and that her character holds a middle place between the prude and the coquette partaking of all the shades of falsehood which belong to each; that her heart will soon be the common property of all men, and to conclude all, that her wit consists of nothing but scraps stored in her memory. Your pardon, Chevalier! but as love is blind, and those he wounds see little better than himself, I thought it my duty to furnish you with some lights as to the object of your idolatry; I am sure you will receive it kindly.

Lift a corner of the bandage, and you will perhaps see what passion now hides from you.

One word more before I have done; it is pretended that Madame de Senanges has subjected you to the chimera of a love purely speculative. You are then a declared sylph, I felicitate you on the new character. But beware the gnomes, Chevalier! they are apt to take advantage of certain moments; and Madame de Senanges, whom the public are never weary of calumniating, it is said, has many of those moments is the course of the day.

I weary you, and I know not myself why I have lengthened out my letter so enormously; it was not my intention, but I have been led on by my wish to open your eyes as to Madame de Senanges, and to make you perfectly easy in regard to myself. Adieu, Chevalier.

## LETTER XXIV.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME D'ERCY.

YOUR *sang-froid*, Madame, does not *mortify* me; on the contrary it consoles me, if any thing can console a man of honor for being the first to break through ties, to which he was indebted for some intervals of happiness. The well-supported strain of irony which appears through your whole letter, proves to me how much your heart is mistress of itself, and how little importance it attached to my passion: I see by the manner in which you disclaim it, the secret source of my inconstancy. Your coldness was the first cause of my crime, circumstances have confirmed it, and your tone justifies me. I shall not I

trust be charged with falsehood in endeavoring to palliate the injuries I may have been guilty of.

I am grateful, and must ever remain so, for the warmth which often, in spite of myself, you exerted to serve me; your name never escapes my lips unaccompanied by a tender emotion. How then can I be called faithless! is it my fault, or your's? Ah! I feel how it is; your mind cannot long sympathize with mine. The mingled interests of your ambition, and your coquetry, deprive you not of the graces necessary to conquer, but destroy in you the means of preserving your conquests. You love only by starts; you use it only as a relief, a kind of relaxation from state intrigues; and were it is not the most important business of life, it is beyond dispute the most frivolous.

I shall not explain myself as to the nature of my attachment to Madame

de Senanges; I know, I esteem, and I respect her, and that is sufficient to arm me in her defence, to repel the unprovoked attacks made on her. I should be at once inhuman and base were I to allow her to be sacrificed to the slanders of a malicious and ill-informed public. You but repeat them I dare believe, for I can never persuade myself that you have invented any part of the horrid falsehoods with which your letter is filled. Wounded self-love may make us unjust, it can never render us atrocious and barbarous. Again I repeat it, I pity you for an error, I accuse you not of baseness. Madame de Senanges is envied, you are credulous, interested perhaps in being so; thus all is explained. You have taken the poniard from the hands of her enemies, and are only the blind instrument which malice employs against innocence.

Would you know, Madame de Se-

nanges, such as she really is, you must imagine the very reverse of the portrait you have drawn of her. I leave to nature, to whom she is indebted for all her charms, the care of vindicating her completion, from the outrages of jealousy; it is her soul which it is of importance to have known and respected. Her's is too noble to require the disguise of falsehood, for nothing inhabits there which need be concealed. Can it be believed, that by accusing her of vices from which she is so far removed, her great qualities will be wrested from her? Is it to judge her, to load her with calumny! How will you one day blush, Madame, for having so lightly credited reports which might so easily have been destroyed! With what pleasure (it is a pleasure worthy of you) will you justify Madame de Senanges in the eyes even of her accusers! Warned by what she has experienced, how must you tremble

even for yourself, since neither morality, virtue, nor elevation of sentiment, can shelter those who do most honor to your sex, from the blackest imputations! Should you ever be attacked, Madame, (for I can believe any thing possible after what has occurred in the case of Madame de Senanges) you may judge by the warmth with which I come to her rescue, the zeal with which I should exert myself to defend you.

## LETTER XXV.

FROM THE CHEVALIER DE VERSENAI, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

What have I then done, Madame? for you are too just, too noble to treat me with so much rigor, were I not infinitely culpable; and I should much rather believe myself guilty of many errors, than dare to suppose you capable

of one. Again I ask, what have I done? For three weeks have I found your door shut against me, you reply not to my letters, and you receive almost every day, a man to whose profligate character you can be no stranger. I have made a strict scrutiny into my own conduct, to find the motives for your's, but have not been able to discover them. Heaven forbid I should look upon your severity as the barbarous sport of a tyrannical coquetry, which led love on to the utmost excess of intoxication, only to rend the too susceptible heart which you had wounded. I should have merited all that has befallen me, had I for a single instant admitted an idea so injurious to you. No; you punish me for some involuntary fault, and I have not even the right to complain.

How short-lived were those blissful days in which you gave me proofs of

your confidence and friendship: and by how many torments have you made me expiate a happiness, alas! so rapid! Since that happy period how is all changed in your heart, and what have been the sufferings of mine!—What can be the cause? I interrogate myself, I find nothing to reproach myself with, and I weep a crime of which I am ignorant. I am miserable! do me at least the justice not to doubt this truth. Some other unpleasant circumstances have occurred, in addition to my disgrace with you; but I see no other misfortune, I feel no other pangs but those which you inflict. My soul is inaccessible to every other impression: it bears but one, it is a dreadful one, but it comes from you, and I attach myself to it; I love to dwell on, to concentrate my whole existence in it. I plunge deeper the arrow which lets out my vital blood, and find a fatal charm

in cherishing the grief of which you are the object.

Alas! what is become of that sweet interest which the hope of not displeasing you gave to all my actions? What resplendant but deceitful clouds hid from me those future woes which I dreamt not were so near! Nothing, then, nothing was indifferent to me. To seek you, to await your commands, to gaze upon your charms, to obtain a look from you, all was joy and happiness the dreams of the night, the events of the day, all retraced you on my imagination, all occupied my heart.—In what a solitude have you left me! now all flies me, even hope, that soothing charm which deceives, yet consoles. I no longer cling to life but for the pleasure of shedding tears, and of feeling by the excess of my misery, to what an excess you, could have rendered me happy. Let them not talk to me of fortune, of

glory, and those vain honors of which I sought the tumultuous possession, only to deck myself with some advantages in the eyes of her who possesses all. Thou torment, ambition, thou fever of intemperate hearts, happy lovers disdain thee, the unfortunate abhor thee. Ah! Madame, you have rendered hateful to me what other men contemplate with rapture.

In the name of the tears which moisten this paper, I beseech you, inform me at least of the motives which influence your conduct. Have I been traduced to you? Hide nothing from me; I can justify myself from all. I fear only the obscurity which conceals my accusers, and the mystery you make of their accusations. What have they said to you? Speak—I die if you answer not. Overwhelm me entirely; I beseech it as a mercy. The suspense I endure is more horrid than despair itself.

## LETTER XXVI.

FROM THE MARQUIS DE***, TO THE CHEVALIER DE VERSENAI.

I KNOW not what magnet it is which always attracts me towards thee when I have any good fortune to disclose; for, without boasting, I require no confidant for my disappointments. Thou canst recollect perhaps a certain letter which I wrote to thee some months since; it made a noise, a tumult!—it was sought after with eagerness, I was myself obliged to distribute some copies of it, in order to satisfy the avidity of the amateurs. Very well, one of them has fallen into the hands of Madame de Senanges. I should have supposed, from the inflexibility of her principles, and the dignity of her primitive manners, that it would have startled, incensed her

against me. No: since the reading of it, she has redoubled her interest for me, and I am more in her good graces than ever. She lectures me a little, but with so much sweetness, in accents so soft, that she herself destroys all the effects of her sermons. I believe, Heaven pardon me, she has formed the project of converting me. This is the secret which I wanted to deposit in thy bosom, my dear Chevalier, and thou wilt with me watch all the gradations of my success. Hitherto I have only attached myself to those accommodating, expeditious, condescending fair ones, who give more vogue than consequence to their adorers. My reputation is more brilliant than solid, it is time it should rise to maturity, that it should acquire consideration in the eyes of the charming sex, who, I know not why, have persuaded themselves that I am superficial. Madame de Senanges

is precisely the object proper for this purpose. The more I see her, the more estimable she appears to me. With an appearance of levity she possesses solidity of judgment, greatness of mind, heroism of soul, whilst real dignity displays itself in every look and motion. She is a woman who deserves to be distinguished; and in sacrificing an entire month to her, it is possible we may both advance in fame, and credit.

As thou hast cultivated her (to very little purpose it is true, but enough to know her thoroughly), I demand of thee some preliminary instructions. When I fall into an ambuscade set by women of virtue, I own to thee I find myself in an unknown country. Chevalier, thou shalt serve me as guide, thou shalt aid me with thy counsels; I look upon thee to be marvellously sage in consultations.

But, now I recollect, how is it that

thou art no longer to be seen amongst the visitors of the beautiful Viscomtesse? Is she offended at thee? or art thou absolutely discarded? I shall be severely mortified in that case. I would have thee there to applaud my measures, enjoy my progress, and encourage my inexperience. I am disposed to act a brilliant part, but I must have a theatre and spectators. What warrior loves glory without the incentive of witnesses? It is the same with lovers.

BONJOUR.

## LETTER XXVII.

FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER DE VERSÉNAI.

I HAVE heard, Monsieur, that you are upon bad terms with Madame d'Ercy, and I must endeavour to prevail on you to seek a reconciliation. She has in-

terest, and doubtless many good qualities. You have paid her attentions, she has had it in her power to be useful to you, she may be so again; why break with her?—If indeed she has done you any ill offices!—But no, I am unjust. The interest I take in what concerns you makes me quite different from what I have ever been. You no longer then love Madame d'Ercy.—How much is she to be pitied!—If, however, she still loves you! ah! respect her self-love, still more her sensibility; it is dangerous to wound the one, it is cruel to afflict the other. But you are a man of honor, your own heart must be your best guide. But let me repeat it, return to her—if it be necessary. Not that I should advise you to feign what you no longer feel; to change is a misfortune; to deceive, a baseness. But if consistent with your honor, delay not to console her for what is past, ac-

quit yourself of the debt you owe her, and preserve a zealous friend. Were I less your's I should not enter into all these minutia. It is you who render them interesting to me.

I have examined my heart with care, and find I can with safety cherish my friendship for you, because it is pure. the object is worthy, and because I have no longer any thing to dread from it.

I confess to you I feared your love— I feared myself; I flew your society, my behaviour to you wore the appearance of inconsistency and injustice; I wished it to do so, in order to detach you from me. My door was shut against you, I received the Marquis with an affectation of cordiality, of which you were ignorant of the motive; and I was less apprehensive of the opinion which this conduct would give you of my principles, than of the re-

proaches of my own heart for having listened to the declaration of your sentiments. I ought to have imposed silence on you. How was it that I did not? How was it that I had the imprudence to receive and answer your letters? it was an error, an undoubted error.

At length, Monsieur, I can see you again—I can do so without danger; you will feel upon what conditions; and if I am really dear to you, will not hesitate in submitting to them.

My heart is not formed for love. Tried by acute sufferings, warned by the experience of others, supported by the prudent counsels of tender friends, and above all, happy at the calm I at present enjoy, I have for ever interdicted myself a passion which might at first be sweet to my soul, but its effects would to me be dreadful. Loss of reputation, of repose, and perhaps one day, the desertion of the object for whom all had

been sacrificed; such is the fate of those unfortunate beings, who pay by ages of misery for a few moments of happiness. And happiness of what a nature! that for which they must bear the incessant reproaches of their own hearts, which they must conceal from all eyes, which they would wish to hide even from their own!—for I despise those abandoned wretches who are incapable of remorse, too much to take them into the calculation.

I know myself, and I know were I to become susceptible to love, I should be miserable. My existence would be no longer my own; it would depend upon a look, a motion, a gesture: all would prey upon my heart. Alarmed without cause, tortured without proofs, if I distrusted not my lover; I should distrust the power of my own charms; I should never believe them sufficient to fix him exclusively my own; we should be-

come mutual torments to each other.—What, ah! what then would be my support? It is not for those who tremble beneath a load of guilt to search into themselves—Again I repeat it, my resolution is fixed; and I shall adhere to it more firmly than ever, since I have again consented to see you. And you, Monsieur, renounce the vain hope of disturbing the tranquillity of one who is at peace with herself; charitable enough to forgive you for having formed the project of depriving her of repose, but steady in her principles, and the unalterable votary of friendship.

P. S.—See Madame d'Ercy again. It has been insinuated to me that she does not like me—No matter—I repeat what I have already said—Should you follow my advice, I shall applaud you the more on that account. If you imagine, however, that your presence would cause her any pangs, any em-

barrassment—In short, you must yourself be the best judge of what is right for you to do in your situation; and I may, with the best intentions in the world, deceive myself as to the kind of conduct she has reason to expect from you. I return you the letter of the Marquis; I have ran it over, but it has only excited my pity. Believe me nobody in the world appreciates more justly than I do those frivolous beings, arrogant and cruel; the shame of their own sex, the contempt of our's, and disclaimed by both. They are incapable of feeling; that is punishment sufficient.

## BILLET.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

You consent to see me again, you offer me your friendship—I examine nothing,

I submit to all, I shall bear every thing. I am at this moment too much affected to reply to your letter. I fly to throw myself at your feet.

## LETTER XXVIII.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE BARON.

Your remembrance, your counsels, all that assures me of your friendship is most precious to me; and I should have returned my acknowledgments much sooner, but, Baron, the life I lead is so dissipated! or so fully employed! Duties, complimentary attentions, sometimes business, all unite to hurry me from myself, and I must indeed be far thence when unmindful of my friends. How do I envy you the peace of your solitude! what store of happiness is your's! Your soul is calm; this is the

most supreme of blessings; it is the fruit of virtue. You ought, you must, ever enjoy it; and the certainty of your felicity almost consoles me for your absence. Write to me, let me hear often of your welfare: I require it to fill up the voids of my existence. I live a life of gaiety, but I am not amused. There is so little reality, so many deceitful appearances! sincerity is so rare! at least I fear it. Were I convinced of it, I should inhabit a desert.

I agree with you, a heart too susceptible of tender sentiments, is a source of anguish. To be truly happy it is necessary to control our affections, to conquer our feelings, to preserve our own esteem, and to look with disdain on the homage, often false, always interested, of the generality of lovers. To listen to them is wrong; to believe them would be misery. My independence is dear to me, my reputation is still more so; I

will preserve both. Shall I admit love into my bosom! I, already so unfortunate, enter into a new career of suffering! from whence can proceed your alarms? Did you know the opinion I entertain of your sex, how much more offensive than flattering to me the incense they offer, your fears for me would cease. I have met with but one, who has preserved himself from the contagion of example. He is free from those faults which disgrace the present race of men; he is your friend, but I can do him justice without danger to myself. Reflection has armed me against every thing, I feel, I would feel nothing more tender than friendship. The Chevalier, I dare say, has poured all his secrets into your bosom; he esteems and loves you, and for that reason amongst others, I have distinguished him. We often speak of you, few are more worthy than he to set forth your

virtues. My uncle intends writing to you. Believe him not if he tells you I am sad. His goodness, his tenderness for me, make realities of his fears. This beloved uncle is a father, a more than father! That I may never survive him, is the ardent wish of my heart! I have heard that the Chevalier has had an attachment to Madame d'Ercy. Perhaps he loves her still: it is very natural he should; she is beautiful, and certainly possesses the power of retaining her captives. Your letter gave me some alarm, but I have examined myself; I am content with the scrutiny, and penetrated with gratitude for the motives of your solicitudes; but be at ease on my account, I possess your friendship, what more is there necessary to me?

## LETTER XXIX.

FROM THE BARON, TO THE CHEVALIER.

I HAVE received, my dear Chevalier, a letter from Madame de Senanges, but I must make it a point that you do not mention to her my having told you of it. She seems pleased with your acquaintance; but it will be necessary we should talk together on the general spirit of her letter; it is impossible to explain it to you by writing. I feel the importance to you of a very minutely particular conversation on the subject. If you desire this conversation, you will tear yourself for some months from the tumult, the giddy circles of Paris, and from the deceptions of your own imagination, to come and breathe at liberty in my solitude. You will at first revolt from my proposal, for well I know with

what despotic force we are retained by the ties of a new-born passion, and the perfidious hope of a happiness too often more than uncertain, impossible to be attained; but I know also, that the dangers of your stay, more than outweigh the horrors of separation. Habits long submitted to, become as imperious as love itself. We grow familiarized with the vague idea of a pleasure which eludes the pursuit; we dwell on pangs till all the faculties of the soul become blunted, and we sink into a languor more hurtful than the most violent exertions of activity. Our courage is exhausted by fruitless complaints, our strength by wearisome anxieties. The resources of the soul are contracted; by giving way to weakness we insensibly become cowards; we lose our self-esteem, and then all is lost. The unhappy being who is forced to despise himself, has no other asylum but the

tomb. I paint in strong colors, because with men of your age true friendship must proportion the energy of its exertions, to that of the passions it would direct or destroy.

This is the most enchanting season of the year: it is the season of genial warmth, of new life to all nature. Shall the human soul alone not participate in this universal renovation? Trust me, Chevalier, you would here feel the kindly influence. Come, then, and repose your wearied senses in my retreat. Come and pour the balm of health, if I may so express myself, into a heart agued by fear, enflamed by hope, and consumed by all the ardors of youth, and of an over-heated imagination.

You will find here a serene sky, a picturesque situation, hills cloathed with verdure, a majestic forest, the interesting spectacle of rural labors, and rural virtues, the picture of innocence, and

that gaiety which ever accompanies it, the constant activity of a life usefully occupied; you will find here simplicity of manners, sound morals, peace, a salubrious air, books, and a friend. You know not yet the pleasure of rising with the sun, and wandering with a *montaigne* in your hand upon the banks of a sequestered stream, to strengthen the lessons of philosophy by the contemplations of the man of sensibility, and that religious admiration which the aspect of genuine nature inspires; and to be interrupted in these useful reveries only by the approach of a companion who esteems you, who will press you to his bosom, participate in all your pleasures, and fears not to enter into your most secret griefs.

In my meadows you will find a balm for all your wounds; together will we pierce into the obscurity of my woods, there in confiding your weaknesses to

the heart of an honest man, your own will resume all its native candor; it will learn to create for itself those dignified pleasures which repay all the efforts they cost; and above all, to respect the principles of a virtuous woman whom you love, but whom you seek to degrade.

My friend, happiness is only the recompence of fortitude, and the nobler energies of the soul brought into action.

Believe me, you will never attain to it whilst you breathe the envenomed air of the metropolis. There licentiousness is authorized by example—there weakness is in some degree indispensible. Each follows the down-hill path of folly, without considering the gulph by which it is terminated. The naturally-virtuous struggle sometime against the stream, but in the end are borne away by the torrent; and those thus overpowered are so much the more to be

pitied, as their feeble and ineffectual attempts to recover that virtue they have lost only adds to the keenness of their remorse in finding themselves a prey to vice, which was foreign to their souls. "To corrupt and be corrupted," says Tacitus, "may be called the manner of the age." One would think that in writing this striking sentence, the painter of the Neroes and Tiberiuses of his own time, had looked forward to the incurable wounds our morals have received, and the actual state of society in the present day, in which all ties are broken, all principles overthrown. By attempting to generalize virtue, she is totally annihilated. Under pretext of being philosophers, we have no longer either fathers, husbands, or citizens. Adultery is an obsolete phrase, quite out of fashion; that which it was meant to signify is received, authorized, even boasted of. Morality weeps, virtue hides her

head, profligacy rears his unblushing front, and there is no longer a curb to be expected for corruption when the shame of vice has disappeared.

Now I have mentioned profligacy, does your acquaintance with the Marquis *** still continue? Beware of men of his stamp; they have always inspired me with horror. They may be called the caterpillars of the eighteenth century, who have eaten into the core of all the virtues. Dread connections of this nature, and hesitate not to break them. No weak compliances—none of those miserable decorums of society, which substitute a culpable policy in the room of that courageous and wholesome severity, which is the safeguard of the morals, and dignity of the community.

Your pardon, Chevalier; this transport of indignation proceeds from my friendship for you. Again I conjure you, tear yourself for a time from the

dangers that encompass you. I have reasons for urging you to it—my heart requires you—the shades of my forests spread to receive you—consolation awaits you in their recesses. Come and live again to nature, and to yourself: come and find your lost happiness in the abode of friendship.

## LETTER XXX.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO THE BARON.

Best and most respectable of friends, I have bathed with tears of gratitude each line of your letter—of that letter which breathes the soul of virtue—which contains counsels the most tender, the most salutary—counsels my reason adopts, but which my heart, alas! rejects. I deeply lament my want of resolution to fly to you; I lament,

but I remain—My felicity, my life itself, is centered in the place which Madame de Senanges inhabits. She has written to you then. Perhaps you have perceived, from the tenor of her letter, that I am doomed to misery. It matters not; were it even so, I cannot quit her. Her door was shut against me for many tedious weeks; it is only within these few days she has again consented to receive me, and shall I now fly her? not seize on those moments of bliss held out to me. What, has she then written to you? How barbarous thus to torture me with suspense! Am I hated? Tell me! No, beware of owning the fatal truth; my death would be the consequence: leave me my chimeras, my hopes; they are my sole pleasures—deprive me not then of them. Since you exact it of me, I will be silent as to what you have confided to me. Ah! why will you not?

Pardon my distraction, my anxiety; my ideas, at variance with each other, are become confounded; all is combustion in my mind—all confusion to my dazzled eyes! they can distinguish nothing but Madame de Senanges. Did you know the cruel conditions she has imposed upon me! but I will subscribe to them; I will touch her at least by my submission, if I cannot appease her by the excess of my love. Respect her principles, do you say? Ah! is it possible for me not to respect them? Depend upon that adorable woman for purifying the flame she has kindled—for elevating to her own standard the heart she has subdued—for banishing thence all that is not refined, noble, even heroic. Yes, let her open a field of glory; I shall become a hero there to merit her. I believed myself possessed of some virtues before I knew her; I now blush for what I then was.

It seems as if she had created in me a new soul for the express purpose of loving her. O sacred power that governs all my thoughts! O sentiment of an exalted heart! enthusiasm of love! thou canst render us capable of exertions the most painful, of sacrifices the most noble. Fear nothing, Baron; the epoche which has stamped my life with true honor, is from the instant I have known Madame de Senanges. I feel myself worthy of being loved by her; and by my presumption itself you may judge how strongly I am confirmed in virtue. Yes, yes, I will break with the Marquis: I thought him only giddy and frivolous; he is vicious, I will renounce his acquaintance. Adieu, Baron. Excuse the incoherence of my letter. O my moniter! model of true friends! forget, abandon me not: I am at present incapable of attending to your admo-

nitions; but I much fear I shall stand in need of your consolations.

## LETTER XXXI.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

PARDON, pardon, Madame, my temerity in writing to you, in spite of your prohibition. It is an involuntary impulse —it is the imperious command of my heart, which I find it impossible to resist. I have just read over your last letter. That letter, which at the moment I received it overpowered me with joy, is at present a source of affliction. I have dwelt on every expression it contains; they are faithfully imprinted on my memory, and not a single one presents itself which does not add to my despair.

Be my friend, you say; I your friend, friend, Madame! Have you carefully weighed the sentence you have past before it was traced by your hand? But, no; the order escaped you without the least attention on your part to the impossibility of its execution. I have not yet sufficiently explained to you to what an excess I love you. You are that enchanting being which my wishes had long sought, without being able to find. My heart wandered, often returned home hopeless and fatigued from the search; it was a dreary void; it is now filled, all its faculties employed. I know as well as you the pleasures of friendship; its chains are light, its days tranquil; but how delightful are the whirlwinds of love! Friendship!—No, I cannot, I will never content myself with friendship, it is so cold, so calm! At certain moments even your's, so sweetly proffered, does not satisfy

me. In my own mind I renounce the treaty—I execrate reason,—I abjure my promise; then pausing, I recal your orders, and expiate by my remorse the revolt of my sentiments.

But how is it possible to hear you speak, to see you smile, without feeling that involuntary perturbation, those delicious sensations, which are not to be suppressed? How is it that I every day discover in you some new means of pleasing, some attraction more powerful, than on the former? I have dwelt on all your features; each of them contains an appropriate charm, with which I think I am perfectly acquainted—of which I bear away the impression to console me in your absence. I see you again, and my eyes are struck with a thousand new beauties which I had not before perceived. It is in your wit, still more in your soul, that we must search for those emanations that

light up your countenance. Heavens! how sweet to be admitted to find them there!

Cease, Madame, to condemn me to the vague limits of a sentiment sedate and moderate. This ray of divinity, this immortal flame, which warms and animates my existence, is nothing else but love; and you interdict, you dare take up arms against it! You dread being one day abandoned by the object to whom you should have sacrificed every thing! Ah! cease to fear it! your charms will ensure his constancy for the present—your virtues for the future. Should I ever obtain your love, could I ever flatter myself with the sweet certainty of it, the sense of my happiness would only draw closer my bonds; it would add the enthusiasm of gratitude to the intoxication of love. The most culpable of all ingratitude is

that of a lover who arms himself even with his felicity itself against the object to whom he owes it, and becomes cruel in proportion as he has been rendered happy. The slightest favors from a beloved mistress are inestimable blessings, and souls of delicacy are still more strongly bound by the same causes which serve to detach those of a grosser texture.

But what a picture have I drawn! perhaps it will excite your indignation. Again I entreat your pardon; I was wrong to complain—I confess and repent my fault. Since you have again permitted me to visit you, ought I not to be happy! Only permit me to write to you—deprive me not of your letters. It is from the full display of your virtuous mind that I shall acquire that courage necessary to support my own; your letters alone will endue me with

fortitude to obey you. I will prohibit myself all the claims of love: ah! leave me at least its cares!

P. S.—No, Madame, in spite of your remonstrances, I will not visit Madame d'Ercy again; my resolution is fixed. It is not a sacrifice I make to you; you would not accept of it; it is a duty I impose upon myself. Did you know in what a strain she has written to me! But why waste time on her? I would only think of you. In mercy, answer me; two lines—two words—even one. I tremble lest you refuse.

## LETTER XXXII.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

Yes, Monsieur, it is a point resolved on. I will hear no more of love, even

of your's; never more will I admit the mention of it. I should be very sorry to become familiar with the subject; I am more afraid of it every day, and I do all I can to encourage this salutary dread. Assist me in my project; the effort is worthy of you; and I promise you as recompence all the sentiments of real friendship. A moment's patience: exclaim not against my injustice; I am only prudent, and I am about to give you a proof of my equity. My letters give you pleasure—you tell me so at least: they are necessary for you—they endue you with that degree of fortitude I exact from you. Oh! so much the better; I will continue to write to you then; but consider it well, it is only on condition that you shall be very courageous. No more letters from the moment I perceive your weakness return; my word is past. No, you must not be deprived of every thing at once; and

then there can be no harm in conversing a little with one's friend. I shall preach to you sometimes, and I am sure shall weary you often; I perceive no inconvenience but to yourself; from my great indulgence I will yield you precedence in that article. Am I not very good! Too much so perhaps. How correct myself? The attempt would be painful, the success uncertain; from thence proceeds discouragement, the most disagreeable of all states. You see I keep my word with you; here is already a little treatise of morality—not very connected it must be confessed. How many inexplicable things! One would not be a woman for nothing.

## LETTER XXXIII.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

You no longer receive the visits of the Marquis! I was very well convinced, Madame, that you would not admit him as a part of your society for any length of time. They are not worthy of being tolerated, those despicable beings whose impertinent vanity exaggerates their success; who boast of every thing, yet merit nothing; and who in the end persuade themselves of the truth of all they would have had others believe.

I am far from thinking that any timid counsels, or unimportant reflections on my part, could have any share in determining you as to the conduct you have adopted. To decide, you need

only consult yourself, nor could they have any more influence on your actions than on your sentiments. However, let what will be the cause, you must permit me to rejoice at the disgrace of the Marquis. He provoked me beyond all bounds with his eternal babble, his declarations, and the anecdotes of his good fortune. He had such a passion for kissing your hand!—He has at length been cured of that habit.

Who then was that woman who staid so long with you the day before yesterday? She was ill-nature personified. She declaimed against love, and you, Madame, listened to her. I abhor all prides—and she beyond all others. Her dissertations are without end—she analyzes all; for my part I analyze nothing; I should be very sorry to undertake the analysis of sentiment. That woman is of marble. Her conclusions are frozen as herself—they must be false.

The last time we conversed together, you laid your commands on me to be less sad; I exerted myself to obey you, but can I control my sensations? Ah, Madame! I no longer know myself—every moment of my life is marked by perturbation—the happiness of seeing you is disturbed by the fear that it will so soon vanish—and I anticipate with dread, on entering your presence, the cruel moment when I must quit you. What pangs do I feel in separating from you!—with what agitations do I again behold you!—with what emotion think of you. My passion destroys my reason—it renders me unjust. You never cast on others the most rapid glance that does not pierce my soul with anguish. You are of more value to me than all other objects—you hold place of all—you have made me forget all. Alas! I perceive my fault. To gratify you I had promised to converse

with you on indifferent subjects—I have had power only to speak of my love.

## LETTER XXXIV.

### FROM THE MARQUIS DE***, TO THE CHEVALIER.

I no longer comprehend either men or women. Thou at least art singular, with the good qualities of thy heart, and the caprices of thy conduct. I found myself in rather a critical situation. Pursued by a pack of barking creditors, I had, to appease the violent clamors of those gentlemen, occasion for three hundred louis d'ors: very well, thou sentest it to me with the best grace in the world; I knew thou wert even glad of the opportunity. I went in search of thee, could find the no where; thou hast contrived to elude me in all

places of public resort; it seems as if thou affectedst to escape from my gratitude. Explain thee who can. I have however excellent things to disclose to thee. My life is a tissue of events, where each serves to give value to the other. I find it myself difficult to follow the thread, so complicated does it become from day to day.

In the first place then, I am no longer admitted to visit Madame de Senanges. That woman is one of your indefinables. She dismissed thee, and received me; she now recalls thee, and expels me. There is concealed beneath this play of cross purposes a kind of whimsical coquetry which would interest me infinitely, had I not been so vastly well accustomed to these revolutions in gallantry. To involve one's self with one woman, might be the means of losing twenty. Thy Madame de Senanges was however essential to me for

the moment. I sought a mistress of principle; I required such a one to put the finishing stroke to my celebrity. She would lend me no kind of assistance for this purpose; my reputation seemed perfectly indifferent to her. What wouldst thou have had me do? I am now indeed entirely consoled, and thou wilt confess that I have reason to be so. I have been introduced at the house of Madame d'Ercy, where I have already made an inconceivable progress. There is what may be called a woman! Business, love-intrigues, ruptures, perfidies; she can reconcile all—make all go hand in hand. She could overturn a kingdom in case it were necessary. All I fear in attaching myself to her is that I shall find it difficult to quit her.

She has I know not what kind of fascination about her which retains me, and I can very well pass an hour to an end with her, without wishing very

much to go elsewhere. I could not have conceived that thou couldst abandon her with so much courage and *sang froid*. It is a master-stroke for which I envy thee, and feel in myself all the ardor of emulation.

She is certainly in high credit at court. She promises to all the world, but keeps her word with nobody—for political reasons it may be; Heaven knows!

One morning lately she had appointed me to visit her at her own house at a rather early hour. I arrived, but was told she was not yet visible. I applied to her woman, and was introduced. The first room I was ushered into was her chamber of *audience*. I could not forbear laughing in passing through it: it was filled with people of all descriptions. One held a petition, another a memorial. I was shewn the rector of the parish, and next to this dignitary, a

strolling player, who solicited an order for admittance into the company of Crispin. Through this crowd of worshipers, who waited with respectful patience the awaking of the Marchioness, I penetrated to the sanctuary where she reposed. I know not a bed-chamber more voluptuous, a recess more captivating. Whilst I admired the temple, the presiding goddess awoke. Her first sentence was uttered in a tone of anger. She then raised her long and silken lashes, opened her eyes, shut them, opened them again, perceived me, affected to quarrel with me for my intrusion, laughed in the midst of her expostulation, and was soon appeased. Her head-dress was discomposed, and became her still the better; her complexion was animated with that lively tint which displays the soft calm and balmy freshness of sleep; the ribbons which tied her night-dress were

loosened, and allowed my eyes to wander over all the graces of a studied negligence. I own to thee that but for her woman—But I was constrained to observe the rules of decorum in spite of myself, and how do I know! perhaps in spite of her.

After some little attempted liberties on my side, not carried very far, and some feigned repulses on her's, her monkey and two secretaries were introduced. Each took their posts: the monkey jumped on the bed, played over a hundred gambols, a hundred impertinences, and as he is jealous of me, attempted to make some depredations on my face. The secretaries sat down, one on each side of the bed: she dictated to them by turns; to one the favorite ballads of the hour, and some libertine verses made by an abbè; to the other, instructions and notes for the approaching journey of the court. From time

to time added some illustrations. The secretaries laughed, the monkey grinned, the woman of the Marchioness yawned, and all contributed to the perfection of the scene.

At length Madame d'Ercy arose. By seemingly unstudied movements she let me see a multitude of charms, from which she begged of me to turn my eyes. And now, behold my pretty minister of state seated at her toilette, in a dressing gown elegantly fastened with rose-colored knots. Her poor candidates of the anti-chamber were then desired to enter. She said a word to one, cast a glance on another, was very obliging to the player, took no notice of the rector, received with a careless air the papers presented to her, ordered me to pull the cords of all the bells, commanded her horses to be put to, dismissed her levee, finished her dressing, took leave of me, and set out for Ver-

sailles, where, if report is to be credited, nothing is concluded on without her.

Does not this description, Chevalier, inspire thee with horrid regret? Madame d'Ercy is a phenix. She has already initiated me in a marvellous degree into the arcane of life, and dictated to me I know not how many little plans of malice, which are really of very high value, from the spirited motion they produce in society. She possesses in a supreme degree the erudition of the politer circles; manages with rare dexterity the pointed shafts of ridicule; and we two, with our powers united, could set all Paris in an uproar, should the fancy strike us.

What displeases me most in her, is her obstinacy in certain points, which nothing can overcome: for instance, she will absolutely have it that I have received the last favors from Madame de Senanges. I have most solemnly assured

her that this is not the case, and think it is a subject in which I should be the best informed; she insists upon it that it is so, that it must be so, that the contrary is a mere fable, and that in every thing probability is to be looked to: she put me quite in a rage; thou knowest marvellously well, that had I been on those terms with Madame de Senanges, I should not have been such a child as to make a secret of it; above all, I should not have failed to acquaint thee with my success; these are observances indispensable between friends; but, upon my honor, I failed in my designs there, I confess it with the utmost confusion. Heaven forbid I should ever belie that unfortunate sex who have no other means of vengeance than their tears, and whose weakness, physical and moral, leaves them no other arms than the honor of their assailants, or the generosity of their vanquishers.

But all these reports will in time subside, and Madame de Senanges will not suffer in her reputation by her connection with me. All I see in it, vexatious for her at present, is, that she has the name without having reaped the profit. Thou must agree with me, that in this she has conducted herself but ill. She has the character of a finished coquette; this is to us the signal for assault; the yielding moment it is supposed is not far distant; we fly to the charge, find the fortress impregnable, and soon find out we are duped.

Adieu, Chevalier, when shall I see thee? Be not uneasy about thy money: thou art a friend very essential to me, and I shall take care not to forget it. The remembrance may be useful to me on more occasions than one.

## BILLET.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO THE MARQUIS.

You know my opinion of Madame de Senanges. A woman such as she is must be respected, and I shall regard as personal offences all the light expressions you shall in future make use of where she is the subject. Pay a little more serious attention, I beg of you, to this, than to the debt of which you speak, and which I forget.

## LETTER XXXV.

FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

I WRITE to you, Monsieur, only to inform you of the return of the Marechal de ****; go and wait on him, he is prepossessed in your favor. He is a man who will serve you, without making a parade of his services; he has a great deal of frankness, true greatness of soul, and a character rather of the paladine cast, in an age when chivalry is so rare! As in your profession you must ask, neglect not the means of obtaining: it is indispensable that I should remind you of all this, and act for you, since you will not act for yourself; will you permit me? Oh yes, you must consent that I shall partake with Madame d'Ercy the

happiness of being useful to you. I have friends of real consequence, they have little of the courtier about them, but are much esteemed at court; they seldom promise, but always fulfil when they do. How happy shall I be if they succeed; it is but just that friendship should have its enjoyments as well as love.

You are right, I only consulted my own opinion in my dismissal of the Marquis; your reflections only hastened the effects of my own. Heaven preserve me from ever conducting myself after the decisions of others! At your age it is possible to give good advice; but for a female, it is hardly ever right to follow it. You advise me for your own interest perhaps, I act as I think will be best for mine. How was it possible for me long to admit the visits of the Marquis, after what I have known and seen of him? Ah! Monsieur, pro-

fit by his example, beware of resembling him. To seduce, to feign, to deceive, to act a perpetual lie, and to whom? to the hearts which had opened to receive you; to enjoy the tears you had forced to flow; to glory in your perfidies, and boast of your triumphs; to associate beings worthy of a better fate, with the most despicable of wretches; what barbarous pleasures! and such are the men to whom many women confide their fame, their happiness! What men! What women! What a world! We ought to fly it, or at least look upon it in its true light.

Good God! what a transport of rage have I given vent to! but believe me, I am not the less sensible of all you have written to me; you act not, think not like the monsters of which I have been speaking; I am convinced of it, and therefore have not feared to make you a party in my indignation against them.

You have but one fault, it is that of believing that friendship is less to be prized than love. Endeavour to correct yourself, and to think more justly.

## LETTER XXXVI.

On my returning home to-night, Monsieur, I found your name in my list of visitors, and am very sorry I was not in the way to receive you. At what hour did you come? I delayed my going out as long as I could, and am, I know not why, discontented with my evening. I have passed it in making tiresome and dismal visits to persons, alas! as proud of moving in a certain sphere, as for any merit in themselves; and there are weak minds on whom this exterior imposes, and little minds who look up to it with idolatry, to whom it is every thing, and virtue nothing. Pride ex-

cites our pity, meanness raises our indignation.

I supped at a house of mourning, and thought to meet there only melancholy people. Ah! what hearts there are in the world! A lady who had just lost her mother, a mother worthy to be regretted, whispered in my ear: "I have never so much wished to go to a ball, as since it has been impossible for me to do so." "Ah! Madame," answered I, "speak that very low."

This woman, however, is one of a set of prudes who associate together; she enjoys a good reputation, and is remarkably exact in the performance of all her duties. After this, shall we judge again by appearances? I should have a much better opinion of her, with a conduct less strict, were her heart more warm; and would sooner pardon a series of levities, than a single moment of ill-natured apathy.

Do not mention this circumstance, I confide it only to you; I should be very sorry to spread abroad any thing to her disadvantage; it is possible too that she is only inconsiderate in her manner of expressing herself. I love to believe every thing that can justify a character; and feel myself more than ever inclined to indulgence.

## LETTER XXXVII.

FROM THE MARCHIONESS D'ERCY, TO THE MARQUIS DE ***.

Confess, Marquis, that you are the most odious of men. I went to sup at the delicious country house of Madame ***, in the hope of meeting you there; but behold, I did not even hear you mentioned. It is an abode the most sweetly smiling, but contains a society dis-

mally stupid. I shall have the vapours for a fortnight, and you are the cause of it.

For your amusement, I will give you the history of my journey. You know, or you know not, that to get thither, it is necessary to pass a ferry; my horses, from a caprice the most unaccountable and surprising, absolutely insisted on dragging me right into the river. They certainly were most maliciously inclined at the moment; but as I am not an expert swimmer, I thought it better to alight from my carriage than dispute the point with them any further. My charioteer, who was excessively drunk, scandalized at their behaviour, fell to lashing them with all his might, by way of obliging me; one of my footmen received a stroke intended for the horses, which incensed him so much that he flew at the coachman, whom he corrected very handsomely; the latter swore at a tre-

mendous rate, and it was some time before my orders for a general pacification were attended to. At length we got into the boat, all very much out of humour with each other. My companions on the passage were some peasants, who laughed and talked with unrestrained gaiety; a huge man, whose head was ornamented with a red peruke, his person with a horseman's grey coat, and mounted on a proportionably tall steed; the poor creature, (it is the man of whom I speak) was so deaf, that one of his friends, who attempted to converse with him, could not make himself heard by him, although his voice resounded to the farther bank of the river. We had also a gentleman habited all in green, holding a green parasol, and seated in a pomona green cabriolet, who looked at the flowing of the water with fixed attention. This man is, for certain, either a sage, a despairing lover, or a fool. He never

once raised his eyes; the most brilliant sky, beautiful women, picturesque scenery, all were equal to him, he saw none of them. At length I arrived, and found six females, who looked like so many sybils. The ages of these six women must amount to nearly the same number of centuries; the youngest of them is forty, and she could very well have dispensed with my appearance. The others treated her as a child, and it is charming to be a child on such terms.

Are you perfectly satisfied with me now? I enter into details to amuse you; I think, I speak of you incessantly; this bespeaks a degree of tenderness which absolutely affrights me; I have half a mind to fly you, to spare myself the pain of loving you too dearly. Positively, you become dangerous to my repose: you have desires in which your heart has no share, a heart in which nothing has any share; this *equanimity* has capti-

vated, given me pensive musings, and must end in the ruin of my peace. But what do you mean to do in the affair of Madame de Senanges? In good earnest, your adventure with that woman has done you a cruel injury. You have had the very slight misfortune of not succeeding with her; but you should at least have the proper pride to make the world believe the contrary. You have not done so; how distressing!—Are you not sensible that a woman of a certain description would not willingly bestow her affections on a man to whom Madame de Senanges has shewn such marked disgust? Do you not know that I hate her infinitely? she has dared to be my rival; I should not be sorry to torment her a little; still however, with all the good temper in the world. I am very willing that my hatred should do her a prejudice, but by no means that

it should break in on my own happiness. Good night.

## LETTER XXXVIII.

### FROM THE MARQUIS, TO MADAME D'ERCY.

I WAS very much disappointed, Madame, that it was not in my power to accompany you to the Chateau de***. I have a passion for old women; particularly when engaged at play. Their eyes, in which love's beams are extinguished, are lighted up anew by the desire of gain. As they have no other remaining pleasure, they grasp at that with a degree of avidity that is absolutely charming. No longer tender, they become spiteful; and when I have an opportunity, I find a great degree of luxury

in urging them on, exasperating them against each other, and procuring them at least all the sensations of which their age is susceptible. I trembled for the dangers with which you were menaced in your journey, but laughed heartily at your description of them. The gentleman who looked so attentively into the river, was doubtless some unhappy lover, who sought to familiarize himself with his last resource.

I have read over twenty times, Madame, the most important article of your letter, and ingenuously confess I am embarrassed in what manner to reply to it. I agree with you, it was essential to my reputation to have it in my power to mention Madame de Senanges in the number of those women who have conferred favors on me. The public expected it of me; and I know they never pardon any omission; but they would judge me with more indulgence

were they informed that I attach myself to her for no other purpose, but that she did not give me time to overcome her scruples, or shake her principles. She is a most extraordinary woman, there is no making any impression on her, unless by the assurance of a real passion; and it was reserved for you alone to inspire me with one of that nature.

Ah! Madame, and would a renewed attack on Madame de Senanges, give me favor in your eyes!—I should not desire greater happiness than to obtain her, that I might offer her as a sacrifice to you; but after what has passed, by what means can I accomplish it? or would she give me any more credit than before, for the sincerity of my professions? doubtless much less, did she know the new object to whom I have had the honor of being presented. Let us forget her; let us think only of the senti-

ment which impels us with mutual ardour; be all else annihilated to our eyes, but we two existing in the universe! Yield to the soft emotions of love, Madame, were it only from coquetry; for I know how well it would become you. I will fall at your feet, and there plead the cause of the little deity. It is yours, it is my own cause I plead: I expire if you hear me not. Adieu, Madame, have pity on the most respectful of lovers!

## LETTER XXXIX.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO MADAME DE ***.

Dear friend, faithful depository of my most secret sentiments, kind consoler of my griefs; you in whose bosom I have so often hid those tears which a respectable, yet detested union still forces me

to shed; you, in fine, who can read this heart, (perhaps much better than myself) it is impossible for you to conceive the embarrassment, even constraint I felt whilst with you yesterday. We conversed three hours together; all that confidence could dictate, most soothing, most affectionate, your words conveyed; mine were marked with sadness; you asked the cause; I wished to speak, but could not. I feared to open my soul to my friend!—Is it that it is become less pure!—Ah! judge not so. What is it then which thus weighs upon my heart? It shrinks from that effusion of its sorrows which would assuage their bitterness; and dreads those counsels of which it stands in so much need. No, I will no longer dread any thing! I will fly to friendship, to enlighten, to assist me. My friend, though your morality is mild, your principles are rigid; were you only indulgent I should love you less, never

consult you, nor rely upon your judgment so implicitly. I know not why I feared you yesterday; I shall feel less diffidence in writing to you; and you will yourself be more unconstrained in answering me. In the warmth of interesting conversation, two friends cannot so easily decide for each other.

You were with me when the Duc de *** brought the Chevalier de Versenai to present him to me. You distinguished in him at this first interview, good sense, gracefulness of manners, wit, an air of fashion, and still more, an appearance of sensibility, preferable to all the rest. After this first visit, he continued to pay me his devoirs, and I had reason to believe each time I received him, that we were not deceived in our first decision on his character. I yielded with pleasure, and without the least distrust to that interest which it was very natural I should feel in his favor. His at-

tentions (and never were attentions more delicate) flattered without causing me any agitation; I liked to see him, but was but little affected by his absence: in short, I had conceived for him all the feelings of a real friendship, when I learned the nature of his sentiments for me. The less I could doubt their sincerity, the more they distressed me; the grief of losing a friend, blinded me to the danger of listening to a lover. His letters were so tender, so respectful, that I found myself impelled to answer them: I felt even a sort of pleasure in it, and was far from thinking myself culpable in pitying an amiable man, whom I had rendered unhappy. This illusion was but of short duration; your advice, that of the Baron, a strict search into my own heart, all at once concurred to alarm me; and I formed the resolution, though with the utmost reluctance, no longer to admit the visits of the Cheva-

lier. My door was for a length of time shut against him; during which interval, he wrote constantly to me, in a strain but too well calculated to soften me. He chose the very moment in which I treated him most harshly, to break off his connection with Madame d'Erey; and there was a degree of generous openness in this conduct, which, I confess, made such an impression on me, as could not be withstood. At length, reproaching myself for his sufferings, teized, besides, by his incessant and pressing instances, I examined myself. My reflections, in consequence of this scrutiny, did not alarm me, and I thought myself sufficiently strong to admit him again to see me. I have told you I did not love him, I have written so to the Baron, I have persuaded myself of it.—Can I have deceived you both? Can I have deceived myself?—Alas! since the return of the Chevalier, I find

not all that calm of mind on which I had depended. I am perturbed, unequal, absent; my conduct astonishes me, much more than it contributes to reassure me. I condemn his love, yet I suffer him to speak to me of it; he writes to me, and I answer his letters; I form the project of flying from him, and I cannot without anguish pass a single day without seeing him. My friend, my best friend, do I love? This is what it imports me to ascertain; this is what you must tell me, and what I tremble to know.

## LETTER XL.

FROM MADAME DE ****, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

You wish me to inform you as to the real situation of your heart; listen then:

and be not offended. From all the symptoms which you describe, the decision does not appear to me very difficult. My charming friend, it is love that you feel.—But be comforted—a misfortune is not a crime. As to myself, did not my husband render me the most happy of wives, did I not find in the sacred tie which unites me to him, all the mildness, all the vivacity of an independent attachment, I should feel, perhaps, like others, that want in my existence, that void in my heart, which could only be filled up by an other object. The strictness of my principles, springs from my happiness itself; and I owe to some reflections on the weakness of the human heart, the indulgent lenity of my morals.

Yes, you love, I repeat it; but it is not from me you are to learn this truth. You have deceived me, the Baron, and the Chevalier, but you are not yourself

deceived. Be not startled at this accusation, I will explain my meaning. Your imagination misleads you as to the emotions of your heart, as to that secret and indefinable instinct, which always holds its course, even unknown to reason herself, who becomes accustomed to look upon combats as victories, and resolutions of a moment, as lasting triumphs.

It is granted then that you are become susceptible to love; the point now is to be prudent. To urge you to stifle your passion would be only to give it a greater degree of force, and that is far from my intention. Love then, my dear friend, since it is your destiny to love, but, if you can, confine the sentiment to your own breast; enjoy it even to luxury yourself, but erect not a trophy to him who has given it birth. All that rigor itself has a right to demand from our sex, is not to fall from virtue. I exact

still more. Were all lovers such as they appear to be, I might possibly say, conceal not that the tenderness is mutual, and you may be happy. But these naughty men, so ardent when they wish to please us, become so cold, it is said, when they are sure of succeeding, that they must be loved, if it be possible without their knowing any thing of it. I speak no less for their advantage, since it is a means of rendering them always worthy of being loved. I imagine however, that were this secrecy generally adopted, they would find themselves much embarrassed.

Do not suppose from this advice, dictated by friendship, that I have conceived a bad opinion of the Chevalier; on the contrary, I think him extremely amiable. His character appears to me noble and ingenuous; and I believe him capable of a real attachment. With him the follies of youth have been but

of short duration, and his return to reason bears all the marks of sincerity; but, my friend, my caution is not the less necessary. A virtuous wife cannot confess her love for another than her husband, without losing something in her own eyes, and perhaps in the eyes of the very man whose tears and sufferings had torn the confession from her. She gratifies her heart at the expence of her dignity; this is but a sorry reckoning. To be esteemed, to esteem ourselves, is the first of earthly blessings. It is what you enjoy—what you must ever enjoy. Be not disheartened; sentiment is the inheritance of our sex, not the shame. But whether you rise superior to yours, or are borne away by its force, you will ever find me ready to applaud your efforts, or to pity your weakness.

## LETTER XLI.

FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

I APPROVE highly, Monsieur, of your very great intimacy with Madame d'Ercy, and can easily conceive the necessity you were under of telling her your secrets in a public theatre; this may all be very natural: but it was perhaps not quite so much so, to have assured me that you were no longer connected with her, when I have proof to the contrary, when you appear to me more than ever attached to each other, and when nothing obliged you to hide it from me. I had not the least idea of depriving you of the happiness of seeing her; on the contrary, I urged you to it —how blind I was! What, I offer

you advice! I suppose I had any power over you! It is the first offence I have offered you, but it is an irreparable one. How much were you embarrassed by my appearance! You little expected—you wished not for me. Madame d'Ercy assumed an air of triumph—her gaiety embellished her in your eyes—my presence seemed to augment it—I lent her new charms, yet you could tear yourself from her—you went away without coming into my box—you scarce dared look at me. Ah! I can well believe it, we must blush in the presence of the object we have deceived: the moment of detection is that in which esteem must end, and we regret even that fair appearance which had been usurped. I must then renounce the good opinion I had of you? oh yes! I must: henceforward I shall trust in none. With so much the appearance of candor, yet to be incapable of real friendship! Live

happy with Madame d'Ercy, and cease to feign what you never felt. But tell me, what cruel motives could have induced you to deceive me? What a return for my confidence! What had I done that you should seek to inspire me with a sentiment to which your own heart was a stranger? and which perhaps!—I might have been the most miserable of women; such was the fate you had prepared for me! How much do I applaud and felicitate myself on my having taken it into my head to go to the comedy! I am undeceived—it is never too late to be so; why am I not content? I have lost only an illusion.

## LETTER XLII.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

*Cease to feign what you never felt.* And is it you, Madame, is it you indeed who have written those dreadful words! In what colors have you painted me! This is then all the progress I have made in your esteem! I still keep up an intimacy with Madame d'Ercy!—you have proofs of it! Dare I demand them of you? proofs that I have betrayed her for your sake—that I now betray you for her's; that is, that my conduct has been shamefully base and deceitful to both! Oh Heavens! you think thus of me, and you hesitate not to tell me so! All is now lost to me. A conversation at the theatre, an interview to me un-

expected and hateful, these are the grounds on which you found suspicions that have torn from my grasp the whole happiness of my life! Will you permit me to relate the history of last night's adventure as it really passed? Will you deign to hear, alas! will you deign to believe me?

The curtain was drawn up, and I past through the lobby in order to get to my place, when I heard myself called. I turned back, and perceived Madame d'Ercy, whose voice even I had not recognized. It was in vain that I told her I wished to attend to the first scene: she insisted on my coming into her box —affected speaking to me with an air of business—and told me a thousand *nothings*, which distracted me with impatience, and which she incessantly renewed. Doubtless she foresaw your coming: you appeared, my embarrassment redoubled, so did her cruel joy.

Twenty times I arose to leave her; as often she detained me by ironical entreaties by an inhuman strain of ridicule, and by innumerable provoking questions, to which it was impossible for me to reply. How did I detest those immoderate fits of laughter which she took a pleasure in reiterating—how did I detest her, and above all, how did I execrate my own folly in having thus fallen into such a snare! I feared to meet your eyes—I dreaded the jealous penetration of her's—I sat in torture—she enjoyed my sufferings—and you, Madame, you could remain unconscious of them! At length I found a favorable moment to escape from the malignant fury who thus persecuted me; but I had not sufficient resolution to remain in the house. How should I dare approach your box? I was only unfortunate, yet I felt as if I had been culpable. To love such as mine, even accidental circumstances

which displease the adored object become sources of self-reproach, of self-accusation; and self-inflicted punishment ensues. Alas! the motive of my actions escaped your sight; you beheld them with an eye of severity, and judged them accordingly. Yet, ah! if your heart had any share in dictating your letter, how precious to me would be each syllable it contains! How should I welcome your anger, your alarms! I would bless even my torments—I would trace all to their cause, and be consoled by that latent sentiment which would mingle a secret charm with the tears it had forced to flow. How sweet is such a dream! but how dreadful to awake to a cruel reality! What, Madame, you forbid me your presence! you will not even be a witness of my misery! At least give me back your esteem; without that, life will become a burthen too heavy for me to bear. I await your answer;

I dread, yet I desire it: all is war within my bosom. You may overwhelm me, but I defy you ever to wrest from me the smallest particle of my love; it will still remain entire in spite of you, and shall be my torment if it cannot be my consolation.

## LETTER XLIII.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

I RESTORE you my confidence—I will be no longer unjust. Can you pardon me? I have suspected you, I was very culpable in doing so; but you have suffered, and I am but too severely punished. What must you have thought of my letter?—what do I now think of myself for having written it! I begin to detest even friendship. It is turbulent,

distrustful—it has faults which I thought incompatible with it. To be truly happy, we ought to banish every thing that bears the name of sentiment.

## LETTER XLIV.

### FROM MADAME D'ERCY, TO THE CHEVALIER DE VERSENAI.

Am I not detestable? I have led you into a most wicked snare, is it not so? I have laughed at it with all my heart. To call you, to detain you in my box, to overwhelm you with my unmeaning chit chat whilst the concentrated jealousy of Madame de Senanges figured immediately opposite to us!—these are offences unheard of, not to be forgiven, against which all ought to rise up in arms as an invasion on the liberty of the citizen. Are you then no further advanced in the

knowledge of the world and of the female character? The poor Chevalier was so awkward, so embarrassed! You dared neither look nor speak, scarcely breathe; did I smile, you trembled: Madame de Senanges, who smiled not, had petrified you with a single glance. I did give you credit for a degree of candor almost infantile; but you must confess that upon this occasion you appeared in a light perfectly ridiculous. What, have you not yet learned to draw yourself out of such predicaments? Two women who cross each other in your path have the power to disconcert, to annihilate your faculties! You know not how to repel effrontery—you sink under the situation, and by that means give added strength to the cause of each! I thought your genius was of a much more superior style. Where there is spirit to be guilty of an infidelity, there ought to be courage to carry it through. In all that

has passed, I have found out the way to make you play an under part; you were the inconstant, I the forsaken, yet it is mine to triumph! Do not despair though; I am very good-natured, and still wish to advise you for your happiness; for surely, from the manner in which you conduct things, you are yet far from knowing what will conduce most to it.

Madame de Senanges, as I am informed, puts you to the pain of martyrdom by her tardiness, her extreme reserve, and her bashful timidity, almost equal to your own. Very well, this little adventure will save her the agony of an implicit avowal, and you the pain of soliciting it. She loves you to distraction; it is I, Chevalier, who assure you of it; you may conduct yourself accordingly; and be your faults of ever so flagrant a nature, I will answer for their impunity. You see nothing since

you have become enamored of that woman! you saw not her spite and vexation through her feigned tranquillity; as for me, notwithstanding her affectation of not turning her eyes towards my box, I was not the dupe of her assumed disdain. How she frowned on the actors, as if they had been accomplices in what had happened! I believe she had even recourse to her smelling bottle! Oh, it was plain! If you shut your eyes against such evidence, you must certainly take a pleasure in remaining wilfully ignorant of your own happiness. And now, Chevalier, are you still offended at me? I who have procured you that full conviction which from delicacy, perhaps, you would yourself have repelled—I who confide to you the secret that you adored. From all this it is plain that each time you love, you require the assistance of another to know whether your love is returned.

Give me the preference in this office I beseech you; I have a right to demand it on every account. You may judge by my letter that I am not vastly enraged against you. As to Madame de Senanges, that is another matter; you must permit me to hate her, and to testify it whenever an opportunity offers. You will think it necessary, perhaps, that I should also tell you why I hate her so; but I will be silent as to that article if you please. It is the only one I shall leave to you to divine; a talent which you possess in so supreme a degree.

## LETTER XLV.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

YESTERDAY, in the intoxication of my joy, transported with the billet I received from you, I flew to throw myself at your feet; I found you seated at your toilette; your hair, escaped from the ribbon which had bound it, flowed in ringlets, and reached almost to the ground. Emboldened by a smile you bestowed upon me to dissipate entirely the anguish I had suffered, I trembling renewed the petition I have so often preferred in vain for some months past. You were silent—I again urged my request—you hesitated—I became still more pressing—and you at length said, in the most enchanting tone of voice, *I will see,*

*Chevalier.* Ah! Madame, have you forgot me? I who have suffered so much! in pity think of all the misery you have lately caused me. I feel most sensibly the price of what I ask, and that is, perhaps, only a further title to obtain it. Alas! only recal those charming words to your recollection—*I will see, Chevalier.* As for me, I shall never forget them during my existence, not even after having received the gift. Can you have the cruelty to refuse me? Oh, no! I think I again see you smile, and acquit yourself of the promise your eyes have almost made me.

## LETTER XLVI.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

No, I smiled not at your demand—I had no idea of granting it—I refused it that I might be more rational than you. What, because Monsieur has had a moment of chagrin, consolation must be immediately applied; and of what a nature? Thus are you all! You take advantage of your sufferings to augment your claims. Have I not told you that men are always exacting, never satisfied! At first it is only permission to love that they sue for—then a return—quickly an avowal of our sentiments—and perhaps it is scarce made before they begin again to complain. Ah! she who has the imprudence to listen,

to argue, to depend upon her own strength, exposes herself to many dangers! I will think however of what you—No; I promise nothing—expect no compliance—I prohibit all expectations.—Adieu.

## LETTER XLVII.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

What then could a gift of love produce, since one of friendship alone can fling the soul into the excess of intoxication which now transports me!

I possess it at length, that lock so ardently desired; this is a conquest which my love has gained over your reason; and never victor was more proud of his trophy than I am of mine. But what do I say! 'Tis not the vain

glory of conquerors I feel, it is a sentiment more sweet, more congenial to the soul. In spite of my haughty triumph, I am still as far from conceiving a hope as you are from granting it. No matter —my delicacy will ever furnish me with means of happiness, and my heart will be content if yours can but divine them. What is there necessary to a real lover? every thing, yes, every thing without doubt; but what almost imperceptible trifles can console and cheer all the sufferings of hope deferred! How important are those trifles! How unfortunate the ingrate who knows not their price! Is there a favor, although of ever so slight a nature, is there a single one which is not at all in the eyes of a lover, of worthy of being love's votary? I have kissed a thousand times that beautiful ringlet, of which friendship has made me the sacrifice! I represent it to myself as still flowing over that

beauteous bosom—those innumerable charms, interdicted to the gaze of all, even the most respectful of admirers. My heart palpitates—a sudden fire glides through all my veins—I languish—I burn! Oh extacies of love! ravishing beyond all human expression!

Believe me, Madame, that sentiment which you so much dread is the sweetest charm of life; it mitigates its pains—it redoubles its pleasures—it renders virtue more amiable—it is the perfection of great souls—the source of heroism—the universal bias of all nature. Why then will you oppose her strongest, sweetest dictate, that least formed to be withstood? But is it I who dare complain? to-day complain, at such a moment! Absolute sovereign of my affections, however painful to me the laws you prescribe, be assured they shall be obeyed. I have in my heart enjoyments which will subsist in spite of

you; and although you should even forbid me to be happy, you cannot prevent my being so to-night. How rapid are the hours in which I am blest with your presence! How slow they lag when absent from you!

## BILLET.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

I AM waited for—just on the wing to depart—yet I cannot go without writing you a few words. The gift of friendship renders you happy, you say, yet it does not seem to suffice; you would owe it to a sentiment which I dread. You would—in short, what would you not! And I, I whose severity has permitted so much, (I call it severity, in conformity to your language) I who appear

to you so cruel, am yet much dissatisfied with my own lenity; I am—I ought to be so. And you, Monsieur, how can it be that to-day you should give way to a single complaint? You are unjust, and at what a juncture are you so! gratitude is not one of your virtues.

## LETTER XLVIII.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

* You conceive an idea little favorable to the nature of my sentiments for you,

* Some letters must be supposed to have been written between the date of this and that of the foregoing. Chasms of this nature will sometimes occur in the correspondence of the Vicomtesse and the Chevalier. Lovers enter too much into the minutia of their feelings for the public to wish to be admitted into their confidence in all they write to each other.

Madame; you impart it to me—it distresses me; I testify my vexation, because I know not how to feign; and instead of pitying me for my suffering, you accuse me of a capricious anger against you, which would be a real offence. Oh yes! I will allow you to look upon such faults in the most heinous light, because I can never commit them. According to you it would seem that I am hurt by that frankness of character which I always knew you possessed; for there is not a single good quality you display which I had not before ascribed to you, in a higher degree, than they ever before existed in human nature.

Have you then sworn to be silent on the subject of your sentiments for me? to shut up your heart lest the truth should escape it? What an oath! Ah! Madame, what inconvenience to you can possibly attend the avowal of it? You fear, without doubt, that it should

add to my happiness, and you would rather have a virtue less, than that I should enjoy a pleasure more. No, no, I cannot believe it; you possess too much sensibility to adhere long to this resolution. If you felt not something which spoke to you in my favor, you would not think this reserve necessary; you would grieve for a misfortune which you had caused in spite of yourself, and you would yield me the charms of confidence to console me for the pangs of love. This is a true picture of your mind; is it not? It is this noble ingenuousness which charms my soul—which confirms me your captive. What would be your embarrassment did you find it necessary to use deception in your conduct, artifice in your words! What then would become of those graces all so natural? Even your countenance would lose by it; it is thus fascinating, only because your mind is

painted there in all its purity, its candor, and its delicacy.

## LETTER XLIX.

FROM THE BARON, TO THE CHEVALIER.

Fear not, Chevalier, I shall no longer combat your love. I have fulfilled the duties of friendship; but your passion is proof against every thing; may it then be happy! On this point I shall for the future content myself with some secret orizons; my advice shall now turn on another article. All your letters are filled with brilliant maxims, which display much more the preoccupation of your heart, than the justness of your ideas. You disdain titles, honors, riches; your passion absorbs and blinds you; its activity is the cause of your supineness in every thing else; you see only

the wearisomeness of exertion, without considering the advantages of success. A cloud which you yourself have formed, is spread between you and society; you disguise from yourself what that society exacts, and you affect a contempt for those duties whose importance affrights you from attempting to fulfil them. At your age, we believe we possess every thing when we love. Ah! Chevalier, that effervescence is but short lived; and when it ceases, upon what shall we rest in that void which it leaves behind, if not surrounded with supports that can replace it. We ought to extend our connections, multiply our resources, furnish sensibility with more than one kind of aliment, and provide beforehand, on awaking from intoxication, enjoyments for reason.

Love is the enchantment of youth—fame the object of our riper age; to benefit our fellow-creatures ensures the

happiness of every stage of life. Benevolence is beyond contradiction the most noble of our propensities. We soon perceive, from the interior joy it bestows, the purity of its origin.

There are members of the community condemned by their birth to move in a very limited sphere: but though obscure, they are not the less estimable, when they fill well the part assigned them; and that eye which looks on all, is as open to their actions as to those of the monarch they serve, and who is even unconscious of their individual existence. There are others who form more conspicuous links in the great chain of society—who owe it more because it has done more for them; and their virtues destined to appear with lustre, are in some sort funds which they ought to turn to profit, for the benefit of humanity. My friend, you are of the latter number. The disinterested pro-

bity of your ancestors has prevented their leaving you one of those immense fortunes, which render suspected the means which have been used to acquire them, and almost cast an odium on those who inherit them: but they have bequeathed you true riches, a succession to legitimate honors, a name dear to France, and which having reached you without blemish, imposes upon you the noble obligation of transmitting it to posterity with the same unsullied purity. I know you have many relatives not blest with affluence, who look up to you with hope, and whose support you may one day become. Believe me, my dear Chevalier, we cannot, without a degree of opprobium, fail in exerting that courage which the prize of virtue demands.

My letters inform me that it is in agitation to procure you a place at court, but that you use no warmth in your

solicitations for it. Reflect well that this appointment would place you near the person of your royal master, and blush for not having courted with eagerness whatever could give you any claim to his confidence.

Can you have adopted that common error, that ambition is, in every instance, incompatible with virtue? If you have, discard it, nor ever give way to so confounded an opinion. One of the great misfortunes of the human race is, that men of depraved principles almost universally take advantage of the inactivity of the truly virtuous, to usurp what belongs only to the latter, and which these allow to escape them from a modesty which is no longer an estimable quality in the man, when it is injurious to the activity of the citizen. Instead of groaning for the abuse of favor, of weeping for the wounds of government, what is required of them? A noble

boldness, exertions authorized by propriety, solicitations supported by legitimate titles, would spare them their tears, the state its misfortunes, and the head of that state an injustice which he commits only because all wear masks to deceive him. Of what value is that passive, that inefficacious probity, which contracts instead of expanding itself? It becomes actually guilty of all the evil it might have prevented—it is useless in the same degree that it is torpid—it is the ore at the bottom of the mine.

When a man has the certainty of attaining to elevated situations, when he is even impelled by circumstances to seek them, how is it that he dares despise them? How is it that he is not inflamed with enthusiasm for the public good—at the view of those posts of honor, which would give so much exercise to his benevolence? 'Tis from thence that he could yield assistance to

modest merit—that he could stretch out a hand to the helpless being oppressed by the insolence of office: from thence truth might sometimes reach the foot of the throne, there awaken the conscience of the prince, and plead the cause of the subject. When I reflect on all these advantages, I can scarcely conceive how those, even who by illicit and base means, overleap the boundaries of society, if I may so express myself, to gain its utmost heights, do not find they breathe a purer air—do not shake off by the way, all those vile passions which had at first impelled them; how their souls, narrowed by the petty interests of intrigue, do not expand in the contemplation of great objects; how, in fine, all vicious as they were, the power and the opportunities of doing good, does not lead them home to virtue.

You will tell me there is no end of my moralizing, and perhaps will cite my own conduct in refutation of my

reasonings. It would take up too much time to enter into the particulars of all the motives which influence me. Let it suffice for you to know, that a blameable indifference, assuming the name of philosophy, has never had any share in them. Had I been in your place, had the path to honors been smoothed before me as it has been to you, I should have enjoyed to-day either an honorable disgrace, or the sweet consciousness of having at least endeavored to render service to my fellow-citizens. All to you wears a smiling aspect; you have not even occasion to create circumstances; I only invite you to obey them: haste to meet them, my dear Chevalier. You are young—your soul is noble; I look upon you as worthy of being ambitious. If the ambition of a rascal is a scourge to society, that of an honest man must be a subject of joy to all those who resemble him.

But, I love, you will say, and love requires an undivided heart. Very well, act even for the interest of your passion; leave to common lovers effeminate attentions, an indolent tenderness, a gallantry cold and hackneyed: either I know Madame de Senanges but ill, or that insipid procedure will never move her. Make her the valuable offering of qualities which have attracted public esteem—of honors which are the recompence of them; purify your love by associating it with glory, and she will not be able to deny you some return, without accusing herself of injustice.

Have you kept your word with me? have you broken off all connection with the Marquis? As for Madame d'Ercy, be upon your guard against her; from being frivolous, that description of women become cruel. We may attach ourselves to them without consideration, but in quitting them, precaution must

be used: as they possess nothing to fill up the void in their souls, but the homage which is offered them, they cannot without anguish lose any part of it; and more attention is required to appease their vanity, than was necessary to obtain proofs of their love.

I remember that formerly she used to meet Senanges at the houses of some of her acquaintance; she may injure the charming woman whom you love. I shall never have done preaching; but you will pardon my sermons, in consideration of the zeal which prompts and animates them.

## LETTER L.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO THE BARON.

Oh my guide! my friend! you write me not a single letter which I do not

regard as an inestimable benefit. Your morality elevates and warms my soul—it unites that force which carries all before it, with that captivating charm which must persuade: but at this moment how unable am I to yield to it, and still more, what pleasure do I find in that inability! All my efforts serve only to bury deeper the arrow which has pierced my heart; the illusions of my love are more powerful than all realities united; and more strongly to fetter me, they assume the character of virtues. Yes, I am become more virtuous since I have adored Madame de Senanges. She cannot be loved as other women are loved; and I no longer recognize love in the picture you have drawn of it, nor perhaps in that I should formerly have drawn myself. Oh! sentiment above all price, celestial emanation, balmy charm for beings cast upon this world of care! sole assuager of all the sufferings

of life! I will avenge thee as far as in me lies, for the impotent attacks of reason, by those profound and tender impressions of thee, which I shall ever bear! It is those, my dear Baron, that I shall oppose to your reasonings: did you know the rapture which a single look from Madame de Senanges carries to my heart —could you conceive the degree of extacy she diffuses through all my senses—would you but call to recollection the luxury of bliss attendant even on the pangs which love makes us suffer —you would envy, instead of endeavoring to destroy my happiness; you would confess at length, that man possesses every thing when he worships—when he idolizes an object capable of making him forget all others. How cold are the pursuits of ambition—how unworthy to mingle with those of love! To please Madame de Senanges—to consecrate my life to her—to exist only for

her—is all my ambition, all my desire; every other idea that obtrudes itself, appears to me languid or impertinent: the wish to appear with lustre in the world, to aggrandize myself, no longer occupies my mind—I feel only that of loving, and of being beloved.

Ah! believe me, the duties of benevolence do not appear to me the less sacred, the less sweet to fulfil. I am worthy to taste the delights they promise, those that they bestow; but does it annihilate benevolence to set bounds to those duties? is it nothing to seek to render myself worthy of that virtuous heart to which mine pays homage—to purify the affections in order to merit that heart—to be virtuous without witnesses—to do good in silence, nor wish for worldly praise—never to descend to the meanness of ostentatious vanity, which destroys the charm of the noblest actions, by debasing their motives?

every reference to self in the conduct of a lover, are so many thefts from the object of his love.

Dear Baron, my manner of thinking does not differ so widely from yours as may at first appear. I called myself weak a moment since, but the more I examine myself, the more do I applaud my own courage. What shameful ties have I broken through, since my heart has been filled with love for Madame de Senanges! She has awoke that intuitive feeling intelligent and prompt, which warns us what to seek and what to shun —which paints in glowing colors all the charming decencies of life, and arms us against its dangerous seductions; and which becomes a kind of conscience for all the delicacies of sensibility. But for this adorable woman, I should still have languished in the chains of Madame d'Ercy; to complete my slavery, should perhaps have devoted myself to state

intrigues; have blunted all my better feelings in the lap of luxury, and acquired a degree of worldly credit at the melancholy expense of all real consideration.

But for her, my connection with the Marquis would still have continued; I should have become familiarized with the profligacy of his principles; and in pursuit of the ignis-fatuus of the moment, might have lost that moral rectitude, the most valuable treasure of every stage of life. Scarce had I known her, before I held in abhorrence all which resembled not her; my eyes turned with disgust from whatever bore the stamp of indecency or falsehood, to dwell with calm delight on the ideas of virtue and truth, the sole ones that can present themselves in approaching her. I inhabit a new world which she has created for me; and I esteem myself still the more in proportion as my love for her increases.

Well, Baron, will you still speak evil of love, which can produce such noble effects? What are, compared with what I feel, the vain and empty enjoyments of ambition? You have however found out the secret of reconciling me to it, in looking forward to it, as a means of rendering myself more pleasing in the eyes of Madame de Senanges: yes, let her command me—let her only appear to wish it, and there is nothing which I will not undertake, no heights to which I will not aspire, in the hope of her accepting my homage from thence; of saying to her, it is you who have made me what I am: if the state has a useful member more, it is to you it owes it; my glory is the work of your charms, and I find a pleasure in it only as it is a further pledge of my love.

I love to such an excess—as I could not have believed myself susceptible of. I imagined not, that in the tumult of

the world it was possible to be thus concentrated, thus insulated, thus devoted to one sole object. All adds to my passion, all, even the recollection of those very slight ones which had till now merely glanced over my heart. At the instant perhaps, dear friend, that you were employed in writing me counsels the most wise, the most salutary, at that same instant perhaps my senses were intoxicated with the sweet hope of being beloved; could I then hear you? ought I then to listen to you? Yes, yes, I thought I could perceive a glimpse, a distant ray of happiness—Madame de Senanges—I cannot resolve to hide any thing from you; your bosom is a sanctuary where I may safely deposit even the weaknesses of the divinity I adore. Well, then, Madame de Senanges—she will not always continue insensible; some late conversations—her melancholy when she sees me affected—her joy when

my countenance is more serene—some charming quarrels which we have had—what shall I say! emotions of jealousy which she has not been able to hide, have filled me with the most transporting hopes. O God! I shall be loved! I shall read in her beauteous eyes the expression of a passion which I shall have inspired! My heart palpitates with joy—all my feelings are agitated—and I can no longer, I would no longer admit any other sensations but those of love.

The conclusion of your letter alarms me. What have I to fear from Madame d'Ercy? She has, you say, known M. de Senanges; will she, think you, inform him? Oh Heavens! what a suspicion have you allowed yourself to form! have I myself given way to! No; I cannot take upon me to abridge of every virtue the heart of a woman who once inspired me with tender sentiments. No, my friend, we are both mistaken; I

will look forward to no misfortunes; the slightest that I should occasion to Madame de Senanges, would be the utmost term of my existence. Permit me to love her still, and believe that a love like mine supposes all the qualities worthy of preserving me such a friend as you.

## LETTER LI.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO MADAME DE ***.

My friend, when I made you the avowal of my passion, when we spoke of it together, you believed me possessed of courage; I believed it myself; you were in an error, and I too gave way to self-deception; read now my inmost soul—its weaknesses shall all be laid open to your inspection. Mistress yet of my secret, I tremble each instant lest it

should escape me. His grief kills me; he is unhappy—I am the cause of his misery, yet he complains not, nor has he merited his sufferings; he is all to me, yet I afflict him! My own situation is dreadful, but I am sensible only to his pangs: he is ignorant of this; he shall never know that I would give my life as the purchase of his happiness: never—and can I answer for this? shall I have strength, shall I have the will to act thus? Ah! spare me not! bring nearer to my view what I no longer see but through a bandage which overspreads my eyes, and which each day acquires a thicker fold. Reason, duty, prudence, all which have hitherto supported, abandons me; your counsels even—will they have their wonted power? My friend, never was there love equal to mine; my resistance, my combats, have but added to its growth; and this impulse so sweet, which I am

not able to vanquish—which nothing can ever destroy—which Heaven perhaps condemns—I must for ever lock within this bosom. Ah! wherefore? can it then be a crime to say to the object who is worthy of my passion—I love you, and I am too sincere to hide it from you; my confidence is founded on the purity of my sentiments, and on the esteem with which you have inspired me.

The Chevalier is so honorable! oh, yes! I will answer for him; I know his heart, he wishes only for a return to his love; he could not be happy if I had a reproach to make myself; and besides, if he dared, if ever he should presume upon my favor, if ever—he would cease to be dangerous. Virtue is dear to me, as much so as he is; and the enemy of my fame and peace could inspire me only with contempt.

With what tenderness do I love him,

and with what pleasure could I tell him so! To be the means of his happiness would elevate me above humanity. Can it be possible that I should lose any thing in his opinion by the confession? It is impossible for you to conceive what I suffer when his silence, his sighs, the language of his eyes so forcibly paint his distress, yet am I obliged to restrain myself from the slightest expression of mine! Always ready to betray myself, always fearing to say too much, yet more miserable still for not having said enough, my heart is torn by contrary emotions; love possesses me entire, and I talk to him only of friendship! He quits me in despair—leaves me a thousand times more to be pitied than himself—yet believes me insensible. Ah! I had reason to dread the moment I should cease to be so! My friend, you are my sole consolation; pity me—

love me—I shall be lost if you abandon me.

## LETTER LII.

### FROM MADAME DE ****, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

You wished to re-admit the Chevalier; I had a mind to deter you from it; mine was the better project; my intended advice was good, and ought to have been followed; you would have approved of it without doubt, but matters would still have turned out in the manner they have. It is in vain to banish a lover destined to please; I know not how it happens, he always returns; and once restored to favor, he acquires claims so much the more solid, as more had been undertaken against him. All this pro-

ceeds from a sort of fatality; each have their destiny, which it is impossible to overcome: but if the passion is involuntary and forced, the conduct depends upon ourselves, so do not despair. This wicked Chevalier is not so far advanced as he thought himself. It is one thing to love, another to weakly yield to the passion: you may not be able to prevent the one, but you may very well dispense with the other. Those beings who have no exertions to make, nothing to defend themselves against, though more happy, are less estimable than those who are called to trial; and the struggles of the heart against a cherished impression, display qualities incompatible with the calm of indifference. My friend, you are arrived at the moment of decisive action; draw from the conviction of your weakness itself the courage necessary to vanquish it. Prove to us that in a heart attached to its duties, honor

alone can resist every thing, and that even fate itself cannot triumph over virtue.

Believe me, the agitations of love in the end purify the heart which it had laid waste; I can imagine so at least. To know our own powers, to depend upon them with confidence, it is necessary to have found occasions to exert them. We can only enjoy the comforts of a haven of safety after having braved all the dangers of the tempest.

Thus, I again exhort you, not to stifle, but conceal your love. You will thank me for every effort which this constraint will cost you; and the pride of such a sacrifice will be much more gratifying to you than the pleasure of having yielded to your weakness.

I have just read over your letter again, and it has filled me with discouragement. It is the effusion of a heart the most tender, the least disposed to combat

those sentiments which would destroy its peace. My friend, my dear friend, you have sworn to one man to be only his; but it is Heaven which has received the oath—it is friendship which recals it—and it is your own honor which reclaims it of you. Stop for an instant on the brink of the precipice to contemplate its profundity; start back from the gulph, it is not yet too late. My arms are open to receive you—my heart ready to treasure all your tears. Those tears will be much the less bitter that it is not dishonor which has forced them to flow.—Adieu.—Reflect upon your own situation, and rely upon your friend.

## BILLET.

FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO MADAME DE * * *.

My tears flow, yet scarcely am I worthy that your bosom should receive them. I love, and I have no longer the strength to conceal it—I love—Oh my friend! that word alone harrows me with dread, yet this terror is no defence against any thing. You exhort me to hide my passion. Alas! it is too late to attempt it! It appears in my looks—it breathes in my accents—my silence betrays it; again I repeat it, your caution comes too late. All yet in my power, I promise you, that is to ennoble my weakness. You shall still esteem me, and I have not lost all.

## LETTER LIII.

FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

Ah! what distress do you cause me, yet how grieved should I be not to have known you! The present disturbs, the future alarms me; and spite of your delicacy, your oaths, and my confidence in myself, did I act with prudence, I should never see you more: but, alas! it is become so necessary to me to see you! All which formerly amused, now wearies me: from whence proceeds this change? I would ever remain ignorant of the cause—never would I have it known to you: believe not, however, that it is what I most dread—what I have never felt. I know not what it is. To fear danger, yet want resolution to fly from

it! is it possible to be more weak, more inconsistent? Yes, I am indeed weak: ah! would I had either more or less of reason! What, neither to have power to avoid nor to vanquish those evils which we incessantly struggle against; and to have no other hope as a reward for those struggles but a detested victory! to incur a misfortune, or commit an error, what a frowning perspective! The disorder of my mind is extreme—augment it not, I conjure you: in the name of your love, in the name of the most tender friendship, of such a friendship as never before existed, pity, but blame me not. We see each other but for instants; do you believe you are the only one who perceives this? The life I lead displeases me; it was not always thus unpleasant to me; I was tranquil then, and believed myself happy. Actually I no longer know myself—I tremble to acquire that know-

ledge! I tremble lest you should divine —what does not exist.

## LETTER LIV.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

It is true, I am sad; demand not the cause; I should be in despair did you succeed in penetrating it. I form projects against you, against myself, but I execute none of them. I am no longer the same; that cool indifference, on which perhaps I prided myself too much, was it of necessity I should loose it? How shall I fly from this fatality—how exert power, how even form the wish. Why did you attach yourself to me? None else would have been dangerous to my repose.

Were you, as we, subjected to cruel

restrictions, you would not ask whence spring my alarms; and if you took not repose for happiness, you would court it at least as a shelter from pangs the most acute. The charm of independence, which is perhaps but a chimera, but still that of an elevated mind, the force of prejudices, the tyranny of duty, all would arm you, if nothing could defend you; and so many efforts, always painful, sometimes useless, would rend your heart. Yes, I repeat it, you could then conceive how dreadful must be the situation of one who ought to repress her feelings, who wishes to do so, and who reproaches herself as the cause of a trying conflict to another, as well as to herself.

The old Duc de ***, your relation, has been this evening to visit me; he absolutely insisted on my charging him with some message for you: ah! what could I say to him? If I loved you in

spite of myself, I would hide it from you, from my own sight, from all nature; I would shut it up closely at least, if I could not destroy it; I would weep for your sufferings, whilst perhaps I should cherish the cause of my own. I should be truly an object of pity!

I have felt, for some days past, a degree of melancholy which affrights me; I avoid company, yet I dread solitude; the more one is secluded from society, at some times, the less one is alone. I fear self-converse more than all, but it is in vain I would fly that—I meet myself every where. Ah! how far otherwise was it with me when I loved only my friends! I love them still—I am still happy—I am—yes, I am very tranquil.

## LETTER LV.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

If you loved, you would hide it from me, from your own sight, from all nature! Ah, Madame, from whence could this resolution arise? I know the decorums, the prejudices which enslave a sex of which you are the brightest ornament; but I know still better what is due to an honorable passion; I know too, that nothing in the world can equal the value of a generous heart which feels a joy in bestowing itself, and which would ratify the gift in spite of the collected universe. But, alas! what have I said! is it from friendship, from frozen friendship, such sacrifices are to be exacted? You fear—

Ah ! be tranquil ; you love not. Love, I too well feel, fears nothing but the misery of not being beloved again.

What is it that restrains you ? If I should ever succeed in inspiring you with any return to my passion, rely upon me to develope my happiness through that shade of modesty which would form its sweetest charm : I would hide it from all eyes—bound my existence to you alone—concentrate it in my love—be annilated to all beside. Vain wishes ! You take a pleasure in seeing me miserable ; the sighs which escape from my heart reach not yours ; and that glimpse of happiness which your letters sometimes seem to give me, your presence soon destroys. I can no longer suffer thus. Ah ! Madame, add to my woes, or deign to terminate them.

## LETTER LVI.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

SINCE the instant of your departure, I have remained immoveable in the spot where you left me: I have thought of nothing—been conscious of nothing. At length I have in a degree collected my powers, and I employ them in writing to you. Well, Monsieur, it is pronounced, that important word, you have wrested it from me. Applaud yourself for your work—enjoy my pangs—be happy, if it is possible to be so in inflicting anguish on the object of your love. But wherefore exact a confession which I wished never, which I ought never to have allowed to escape me? Had you not read my heart?

Did my conduct towards you wear the appearance of indifference? and was I not enough enslaved by my passion? Why not leave me the foolish, perhaps but consoling hope, of being mistress of my secret, and above all, the proud consciousness of having nothing to reproach myself with? Will you still boast of my courage, my strength of reason, which I once had, but which I no longer possess? I depended too much upon my own resolution. Painful conflicts—a dear-bought resistance your grief, your complaints, your injustice, in a word, all which should have informed against you, has but the more served your cause. I love you in spite of myself—I have told you so in spite of every thing, and my repentance can make no change in my heart. It is past—they are at an end for me, those days of tranquillity in which I had nothing to conceal—in which I had no need of a guard

over my conduct to any. I was then at peace, exempt from fear, as well as from remorse; nothing now, nothing can ever give me back the sweet repose of such a state. How is my soul agitated! and what power have you over it, since you have triumphed over so many efforts—since this heart, which you have filled with anguish, is all your own. However, hope not from me any further weaknesses; I would fly you to the utmost limits of the globe—I would fly you, doubt it not, should you exact the slightest proof of what I have been so ill able to conceal from you. Ah! why did I confess it? I fear to look into myself—I dread all eyes, yours beyond any—and I punish myself for a weakness—which, however, would be still dear to my heart, would you swear to me that it shall always suffice for your happiness.

## LETTER LVII.

FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

Oh most adorable, most beloved of women! most worthy of being so! My intoxication is at its utmost height! You love me, I adore you, yet you weep! Great God! you dare not, you say, look into yourself; you fear to raise your eyes to meet mine! No, dread not your own heart; you will there find that lustre undiminished, which you fear to have lost. Honor in a soul tender, delicate, and empassioned, survives—even defeat itself. Your reputation is a deposit which you have confided to my keeping—it is a sacred one, it shall ever be so to me. To-night may your slumbers be sweet, and to-morrow may you

awake to peace and joy! Feel a dignified pride in having conquered a prejudice which is not virtues self—which only wears her mask. The crime of which you accuse yourself, exists only in your own ardent imagination, not yet recovered from its sweet confusion. You culpable! If you believe yourself so, what then am I? guilty in a much higher degree. Far hence such ideas! Let us not spread the bitterness of remorse over these delicious moments. Why cannot I to-night watch over your repose! attend your awaking? offer myself the first to your eyes, and there read the expression of your love, not of your repentance! As for me, I have not been able to close an eye in sleep, but what extatic wakefulness! what voluptuous agitations have I experienced! I find myself in a new world—I am absorbed in my happiness—I dwell with fond delight on each instance of it.

Every sentiment which Heaven has bestowed to charm and embellish life, dispute for pre-eminence in my heart; the most tender, the most pure, and the sweetest of all illusions bore me again to your feet: I imagined I still spoke to you—heard your soft accents—pressed your hand to my throbbing heart—fixed my eyes, beaming with love, on yours; and I was glad to banish sleep from my pillow, that I might dwell uninterrupted on this image of my happiness. O you are all to me; cease to weep—to blush; live only to love.

## LETTER LVIII.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

Your melancholy, you say, is the only treasure which is left you. Ah! is it

nothing then to love, nothing to participate in the felicity of the object of that love? All my happiness will vanish if yours is overcast. I can no longer bear that provoking pensiveness in which you seem to take such delight; I hate that repentance which attaches you to it—I hate the charm that you find in it perhaps—and that revolt of the heart against a confession which the lips alone have pronounced. You will then force me to weep a victory, alas! wavering as you are! you would oblige me to bewail your favors, and employ me to dry your tears, just as your hand had wiped away mine! No, the impression you feel is involuntary. It is a vague inquietude produced by that habit of indifference which you took for the supreme good, and the loss of which afflicts you, without your even knowing what you regret. Ah! love, the truest love will dispel those clouds; it cannot fail in recom-

pensing you for that cold tranquillity which you bewail. Repeat to me no more, never again tell me that your pangs are my work: mingle not with the sweet expression of tenderness, the bitterness of reproaches so keen. If you suffer through my means, what then are those pleasures which you suppose me to enjoy? Can you believe it possible for me to remain insulated in the possession of a treasure which to be felt, to be appreciated, to be worthy of us, requires that agreement of wills, that union of souls, that mutual enthusiasm, without which love is but a chimera, an error of the senses, an imposture which promises all, but realizes nothing to the wretch whom it has deceived? Idol of my worship, you in whom I live, soul of my soul, recal your sweet serenity. Your agitations distract, your regrets humble me. Give me your confidence, 'tis all my love dare exact from yours.

## LETTER LIX.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

THAT repentance which wounds you and murders my repose, too well I feel it, but attaches me more strongly to you. Pardon then my pangs, my fears, and my reproaches. Permit me to complain to you of loving you to too great an excess—bear with these last efforts of a cruel but impotent reason which intrudes only to torture me. Ah! leave me still this regret for my own weakness; in other respects I am perfectly tranquil since I have received your promise to exact no further of me. I thank you for it, yet it has rendered you but the more dangerous to me. Abuse not my gratitude, never let it militate against

my peace; I would owe all to you. I depend upon you much more than upon myself. Your honor, my confidence, my love, I would almost say my weakness, all bind you; and this tie, which would be without power over the generality of men, will possess claims sacred to you.

This instant I have received your second letter—How much am I displeased with it! Why this affectation of incessantly talking to me of another object? I am accused of having entertained a partiality for the Prince of ***, I know it; but I shall not take the pains to justify myself from such a calumny: his passion was sincere, but my indifference was well known. That perturbation—that first advertisement of the heart—the emotion, the agitation which affrights, yet enchants mine—it was reserved for you, my dear Chevalier, for you alone to make me know; love then

your work. But no, you doubt my tenderness; ah! have I not a right to suspect yours! And I have had the temerity to listen, the weakness to yield to that love which can thus render its votaries unjust—which can thus lead them to feel and inflict mutual mortification! He is called a god—he a god! he has neither the power nor the beneficence of one. I will swear it at the foot of his altar, which I had hoped never to have visited. I now repair thither to proclaim my revolt; to throw off his, and charge myself with new chains. Mild and respectable friendship! when you possessed my heart—when you sufficed to fill it—distrust found no room to enter. At present I am exposed to injuries, to alarms, even to suspicions. My condition is greatly changed!

## LETTER LX.

YES, yes, love is a god; I have only to look at you to believe it—only to interrogate myself to be convinced of it. What, and am I then so blest! *that perturbation, that first advertisement of the heart; those emotions, that agitation* which you paint in colors so appropriate, am I the first, the only object that has ever given birth to them in your bosom? I look with disdain on all which surrounds me, and feel, for the first time, that there is a pleasure in pride. I have no longer suspicions—I have never had any of you. I know, and I respect your virtue. What seduces and dazzles so many women, those emotions of vanity which they so often mistake for love, have no power over you. You are not susceptible of those

illusive feelings which fascinate their reason, render them insensible to risks, always torment, but never interest them. It is a heart of which yours must be the price. The honorable and tender lover whom you have deigned to distinguish, will believe himself superior to all others, since preferred by you.

## LETTER LXI.

### FROM THE CHEVALIER, TO MADAME DE SENANGES.

YESTERDAY I saw you but for an instant; to-day I shall not see you at all, or if I do, it will be only in the midst of company: to-morrow the opera, the day following another scene of dissipation. Ah, God! how is it possible you do not hate this whirlwind which thus snatches you from me, which engages without

fixing, distracts without pleasing you, which occupies your head, but leaves a void in your heart which you feel, but without the wish to fill it up? To live, to live for love alone! what do you find so terrifying in that idea? Ah! cruel if the word affrights you, let the sentiment itself restore your courage! It gives strength to withstand prejudices, it banishes distrust, it destroys by a secret charm all the subtilties of reason, of that frigid reason of so little value when compared to the blind instinct of a feeling heart.

Your tears, notwithstanding, are precious to me; I love even your alarms. They confirm what I have ever thought —they verify the most charming of all confessions. No, if you had ever loved before, you would not feel so much dread of loving again. The first step would harden you against shrinking from the second; the scruples which

are exhausted in the efforts of a first resistance, are but feebly renewed on the next attack: you would have less courage to struggle against an attachment, were you better acquainted with the pleasure of yielding to it. It is for me, for me alone, you have ceased to be indifferent!—It is I who have awakened your sensibility! What intoxicating rapture is in the idea! How precious is an unhackneyed heart in the woman one adores!

Have you thought since of what you promised me yesterday? Shall I at length see you without the restraint of witnesses, always annoying, often indiscreet, and who obtrude between me and the sweetest moments of my existence.

One thing there is which would possess the power to assuage my pangs; I have submitted without murmuring to all the restrictions you prescribe, but I

dare—yes, I dare demand your portrait as the price of my sacrifices. It will at least console me in your absence; my eyes, which view your fair form but with timid glances, may dwell at leisure on your imaged beauties; it will not, like you, arm itself against me with the frozen arguments of a cruel reason; I may paint to it my desires, cover it with kisses, bathe it with my tears, without a fear that either my caresses shall be repulsed, or my sighs received with frowns. If you refuse me, I must doubt your love, all is then over with me.

## LETTER LXII.

### FROM MADAME DE SENANGES, TO THE CHEVALIER.

Doubt my love! he doubt it! envy me even the small remains of that reason

which has so ill defended me! Unjust man—no, you merit not that total resignation of the heart which with you passes for nothing; this heart is all yours—it no longer obeys my authority—I even take a pleasure in yielding it to you entire, yet you complain! In vain I detest those restraints to which I am subjected; regard as annihilated to me every moment that I pass at a distance from you; your reproaches are added to my privations: they are to you only reasons for fear, titles on which to found doubts, not motives for a tender affection. You who are the soul of honor, who possess all the virtues, one alone accepted, have pity on my distraction—restore me if possible to my duties—and since it is too late to fly, since I cannot, would not even wish it, be generous, be worthy of a love often restrained, always struggled against, and of which I dread the excess. Accuse

me not of coldness—shake not a resolution which costs me but too much. Certain of being loved—loved with a degree of tenderness which I dare not express, wrest not from that tenderness what must be refused with grief, but which cannot be granted without a crime. I implore your clemency against yourself—alas! against us both. No, never, never will I risk the loss of the sole treasure which attaches me to life, the esteem of him I love. The fear of it alone would suffice to render me wretched; do you wish I should become so in reality? If any thing can repair my errors, it will be the courage not to add to them those of a greater magnitude. To live but to love you, to give you at each instant those proofs of it which are consistent with innocence, to seek occasions, to invent new ones, this is all I can promise you, all you can demand, and with which you ought to be

perfectly satisfied. Say, had you the power of forming a being to constitute your happiness, would you give her those emotions which belong to the senses only? Could you be so little delicate as to prefer such to those of which love would be the creator, the lover the artificer, which he should call forth, develope, which, but for him would have remained unknown, which exist by him, exist but for him?

P. S.—Have you reflected on the importance of what you have asked of me? But you would be miserable should I refuse; I am greatly embarrassed!

END OF VOL. I.

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